Chapter 6

THE SECOND INTERIM
(1904 – 12)

The progressive innovations and general raising of academic standards under President Spangler were certainly of great benefit to the College and necessary to its continuing success, but they were not accompanied by an equivalent rise in revenue. Nor did any benefactors or financial supporters even remotely equal in generosity to Robert Patterson appear in the years from 1893 to 1904. As was shown in the last chapter, financially the state of the College went from poor to poorer, and the deficit financing, the hand-to-mouth handling of funds to keep the institution from insolvency must have been nerve-wracking.

Whether eleven years of this constant anxiety were too much for Dr. Spangler one cannot say. His proferring of his resignation in 1901 would suggest this. In any case, at the meeting of the Board of Directors on March 10, 1904, he presented his resignation. The minutes state that “The resignation of President Spangler at this time came as a complete surprise to almost every member of the Board present. After some explanatory remarks made on the subject, on motion said resignation was accepted.” The Board then proceeded to the election of a successor, and the Rev. Philip Vollmer of the School of Theology faculty was nominated and elected. He had been suggested for this office “in a paper sent into the Board, signed by the members of the several Faculties of the said Ursinus College.” This statement certainly implies that a change in the presidency had either been rumored or been desired prior to Dr. Spangler’s resignation.

At the next meeting of the Executive Committee, on April 12, the fact was brought out that the election of Dr. Vollmer was invalid, because he had been elected by the secretary’s being instructed to cast the ballot cast by each member present. The matter was canvassed at a meeting of the Board on April 26. The Board held a second election in which Dr. Vollmer was again nominated. The ballot was eight for, eight against. There were seventeen members of the Board present, and the President pro tem, who did not vote, declared “there was no
election." After this surprising event opinion divided as to whether to adjourn or hold another election. The latter view prevailed, and the Rev. David W. Ebbert '75, a member of the Board then present, was nominated and elected by a vote of ten to six. At the annual meeting of the Board on June 7, Dr. Ebbert gave his formal acceptance of the presidency, and he was asked to begin his administration as of July 1. He was inaugurated on September 14, 1904.

The Rev. David Whittome Ebbert was born in Everett, Pennsylvania, in 1853. After graduation from Ursinus and its School of Theology, he was ordained and served pastorates in Shippensburg, Spring City, Dayton, Ohio, and Milton, where he was pastor at the time of his election. He had been honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1898 and he had been a member of the Board of Directors from 1880 to 1887 and from 1894 to this time.

For whatever reasons President Ebbert's administration was short-lived, for at a special meeting of the Board on December 5, 1905, he read a report on the work of the College and the state of its finances, and then tendered his resignation in these words: "Desiring to enter upon another field I herewith resign the Presidency." His resignation was immediately accepted, and a motion was passed that his occupancy of the office should end on July 1, 1906.

Events moved rapidly. At a meeting of the Executive Committee on December 22, 1905, President Ebbert was requested to give his full time to soliciting funds for the College, particularly to satisfy notes he had endorsed, and his tenure of the presidency was closed as of January 1, 1906. At the next meeting, January 3, a committee of administration was appointed and empowered, consisting of Dean George Leslie Omwake, Professor Whorten A. Kline, and William W. Chandler, principal of the Academy. At the next meeting of the Board, on February 1, Dr. Spangler was elected treasurer of the College succeeding Freeland G. Hobson, who had died on January 10. The erstwhile president and newly elected treasurer was requested to make monthly reports to the Board. On March 2 President Ebbert was released from the work of solicitation but not from responsibility for the endorsed notes, which amounted to $9,200.

All that had occurred in the last two years had its effect on the constituency of the College, and at the annual meeting of the Board on June 7 the special finance committee urged the immediate election of a president, asserting "Not to do so will add to the prevalent discontent and serve to estrange our constituency, create confusion and tend to increase the lack of confidence now existing in our management." The committee recommended that the Rev. Edward S. Bromer '90 be elected president and the Rev. I. Calvin Fisher '89, vice-president, reviving the position in abeyance since 1890. Dr. Bromer was professor of New Testament theology and exegesis in the School of Theology and Dr. Fisher was pastor of St. Mark's Church, Lebanon. Later on in the meeting Drs. Bromer and Fisher were elected and notified of their elections by committees named for the purpose. Dr. Fisher was a member of the Board and at the meeting, and Dr. Bromer was apparently waiting in the wings, for the minutes record that the committees "in a few
minutes returned with the report that they had succeeded in persuading E. S. Bromer and I. C. Fisher to accept their election.

But the best laid plan may come a cropper. At a special meeting of the Board on July 6, Dr. Bromer resigned the presidency and his membership on the Board, to which also he had been elected in June, and Dr. Fisher resigned the vice-presidency, and the treasurership which had been appended to it. Presumably both men knew all the problems of the College, including a new one, for at this meeting Dr. Bromer on behalf of the School of Theology faculty read a paper proposing a merger of that school with the Theological Seminary in Lancaster. Since a draft of proposed conditions of merger was also signed by three members of the Lancaster faculty, it is clear that negotiations had already been in progress. Surprisingly, after the Board had made some revisions and voted to submit the revised basis for merger to the School of Theology faculty, Dr. Bromer was elected acting treasurer of the College.

The matter was canvassed further at an adjourned meeting of the Board on July 20. It appeared that Lancaster did not accept the Board's revisions of the proposal. It also appeared that the proposal was probably initiated by the Ursinus side because Dr. Good, who unfortunately or designedly was in Europe at the time, had decided that he could no longer contribute $2,500 annually to the School of Theology budget. The Board played the situation cannily and decided that the proposal must be submitted to the College's constituency, to many elements of which Lancaster and Mercersburg were still anathema. After this decision Dr. Bromer resigned as acting treasurer, having held the office for two weeks. And then the Board elected Dean Omwake president and a member of the Board.

The next developments in this dual drama came at another adjourned meeting of the Board, on August 17. Dr. Bromer and Professor William J. Hinke, speaking for the School of Theology faculty, since now Drs. Good and Vollmer were both out of reach, stated that the merger should not be approved since the theological alumni opposed the extinction of the School of Theology, which, they felt, the merger would in reality bring about. Besides, since Drs. Good and Vollmer were out of the country, no crucial decisions should be made in their absence. This killed the proposal. The question of what to do about or with the School of Theology remained, and another solution was proposed a few months later.

Having weighed the situation, Dean Omwake at this meeting refused the offer of the presidency, stating that he could not accept the office until "the sum of $100,000 is raised for the use of the College." This decision seemingly postponed his assumption of leadership for six years. In actuality, however, as dean and later as vice-president under Dr. Keigwin, he was the administrative and developmental head from this time on.

The state of confused cross currents and the desire to do something about the School of Theology is shown by the fact that in this same meeting its faculty was enjoined not to engage in any negotiations with anyone without the consent of the
Board, and later in the meeting was authorized to carry on negotiations for possible union with a proposed School for Christian Workers in Philadelphia.

One consequence of the abortive attempt at union of the erstwhile rival seminaries is shown in a statement of the Administrative Committee made to the Board on November 8, 1906:

In taking up the proposition of union of Ursinus School of Theology with the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, the status of the College was rendered somewhat uncertain. Moreover, false reports were spread abroad. In the public mind, distinctions were not made between the Collegiate and Theological departments. Newspapers published accounts of the union of Ursinus and the college at Lancaster. Thus widespread doubt arose as to the permanence of our institution at Collegeville. Even some of our own students questioned whether or not they should return. A few did not return. Prospective students hesitated to cast their lot with a college whose perpetuity was threatened by union with another. When the question was finally settled late in the summer, the evil effects could not be wholly overcome and we undoubtedly lost some students which we should have had.

But the report adds: “Nevertheless, we were able to enroll more students than in former years.” And the Dean’s reports show that the numbers did increase: 102 in 1905–6, 104 in 1906–7, 99 in 1907–8, 123 in 1908–9, 135 in 1909–10. The rumors did not last long.

At this same meeting of the Board (November 8, 1906) an overture was made by Ohio Synod for a merger of the School of Theology with Heidelberg Theological School in Tiffin. The Board at once approved negotiations for this merger without stipulations for self-protection such as had characterized the abortive attempt at union with Lancaster. Everything went smoothly, and at the winter meeting on February 7, 1907, the union was effected and the Ursinus members of the faculty and board of visitors of what came to be called Central Theological Seminary were elected.

To return to the confused history of the presidency, at a meeting of the Board on September 13, 1907, Dr. Omwake formally declined the office which he had conditionally declined ten months earlier. The committee to revise the laws of the College and to “devise some means of increasing the administrative force of the institution” proposed that the office be filled at once. At the suggestion of a new member of the Board, the Rev. John F. Carson of Brooklyn, N.Y., the Rev. Albert Edwin Keigwin, pastor of the West Side Presbyterian Church in New York City, was nominated and elected. The terms of the report and the election made clear that Dr. Keigwin was to be an absentee president, doing what he could for the College while holding his church in New York, of which he was pastor until his retirement in 1941.

President Keigwin (1869–1951) was a graduate of Princeton and of Union Theological Seminary. After pastorates of five years each at Millville and Newark, N.J., he was called to the West Side Church in New York in 1905. Little needs to be said
about him because all records make plain that except for his attendance at meetings of the Board and at convocations, his visits to the campus were so rare as to be treated as news events. On January 24, 1908 the Weekly reports that Dr. Keigwin “was a welcome guest at college Monday night and Tuesday.” After he spoke in chapel a few years later the Weekly commented that his “presence and cheering words always evoke applause from the student body and it is their wish that they might see more of their president.” The wish was seldom gratified. While his attendance at meetings of the Board was regular, he was not a member of the Executive Committee, in which from the beginning much of the current and long range administrative work had been done, and there is little evidence that he gave more than infrequent advice and even less that he created or determined policy.

The College ran smoothly under this administrative pattern though to the outside world it must have seemed peculiar. To give Dr. Omwake a more appropriate title, the Board, on the recommendation of the Committee on Revision of the Laws of the College, on June 8, 1909, re-activated the office of vice-president “to discharge the duties of the President in the President’s absence.” At an adjourned meeting on the next day, Dr. Omwake was elected to that office, and Whorten A. Kline ’93 was named to succeed him as dean, the position he held until his death in 1946, a thirty-seven year tenure which has no rival except those of Mr. Kratz and Dr. Paisley as presidents of the Board.

On October 12, 1912 President Keigwin, who was not present at the meeting of the Board, submitted his resignation, which was accepted, and the Board immediately elected Dr. Omwake president. Why this move was made at this time is not indicated. Probably Dr. Omwake felt the time was ripe to take public command,
although the $100,000 fund which he had stipulated as a condition of his accep-
tance in 1906 was not yet completed, for on February 27, 1914 the Board assumed
responsibility for raising the last $18,000. In any event, the change was a formality,
for Dr. Omwake had been, as has been shown, president in fact for the six years
since the position was first offered to him.

The period from 1904 to 1912 saw little change in the curriculum or in academic
work as a whole. It was in effect a period of consolidation in which the College
assimilated the innovations of the previous administration. The degree of Bachelor
of Science was reinstated in 1905 basically for the same reason it was introduced in the
nineteenth century. One could become a candidate for either the B.A. or the
B.S. in all of the groups except the Classical and the Latin-Mathematical. The
distinction between the degrees lay in the amount of study the student had in Latin
before entering college and the relative number of courses he took in mathematics
and foreign languages as opposed to classical languages in college. As in the nine-
tenith century the Bachelor of Science degree in 1905 did not necessarily mean a
concentration of study in physical or life sciences.

The group system continued unchanged. The only development not already
recorded was the creation of the English-Historical Group in 1910. This new group,
or curriculum, appealed mostly to the women students, who clustered largely in it
and the Modern Languages Group. A handful were to be found in the Latin-
Mathematical and the Historical-Political. This concentration of the coeds in a few
of the seven groups explains why when the first student government was set up a
few years later on the basis of representatives elected by the groups, the Modern
Language Group was disfranchised, for the women were not a part of the student
government or covered by its regulations.

Changes in the patterns or offerings of departments were likewise minor or
nonexistent. One reason for this stasis was that changes in the personnel of the
faculty were fewer. Despite the fact that faculty salaries continued to be very low
and not always paid regularly, several teachers came to Ursinus, liked it, and stayed
through the hard times of the College's seemingly perennial financial crisis.

Notable among these were two professors who joined the faculty at the end of
the preceding administration. After the death of Professor Ruby in 1896 various
persons taught English, none of them for more than two years, until in 1903 Homer
Smith came to Ursinus. A New Englander who was a graduate of Amherst, Dr.
Smith had his graduate training at the University of Pennsylvania where he special-
ized in Elizabethan literature under Felix Schelling. He had taught for a short time
in Hawaii where he met and married Julia Perry, and he and Mrs. Smith were
indefatigable travelers, going almost every summer either back to Hawaii or to
Europe. Apart from literature and travel his other major interest was music. An
accomplished organist, he played in chapel for many years and served as the organ-
ist at Trinity Church. Eventually increasing deafness made him give up this avoca-
tion. A sedate and cultivated gentleman whose New England accent delighted
some students and baffled others (long before the Kennedys were heard of or from,
Ursinus students learned that we live in "Ameriker"), he taught all the advanced courses in literature until the advent of Dr. Norman E. McClure in 1928 and was the head of the English Department until his death in 1934.

The other major figure to join the faculty in 1903 was Matthew Beardwood. A native Philadelphian he had his undergraduate training (and his A.M.) from Central High School, which was then as now a degree granting institution. His medical training was at Medico-Chirurgical College (where he took his M.D. in 1894), and he did graduate study in chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania. He set up practice in Roxborough, where he continued to practice until his death, and was from 1896 to 1903 a teacher, in various ranks, of chemistry at Medico-Chirurgical College. Dr. Beardwood's special interest was toxicology, and he was for many years called as an expert in the Philadelphia courts to testify in cases of poisoning. A tall, shy, gentle and gentlemanly bachelor he taught at Ursinus until his death in 1941. His memory is perpetuated in Beardwood Hall, for which he gave his estate in memory of his sister Hannah, and in the Beardwood Chemical Society.

Like Dr. Smith, Dr. Beardwood inherited a department which had passed rapidly through several hands, though in this case the last hands had been the capable ones of Professor John Raymond Murlin. In later years Dr. Beardwood's scholarship did not keep up with the enormously expanding research in chemistry, but this inadequacy was overcome by the addition of Dr. Russell D. Sturgis in 1925 and of Professor William S. Pettit in 1933.

A distinguished teacher whom Ursinus lost in this period was Dr. Karl Josef Grimm. Born in Germany, Dr. Grimm was educated in gymnasium there and in Canada and Italy before he took his doctorate at Johns Hopkins in 1899. A scholar in Semitic as well as western European languages he taught at Ursinus from 1901 to 1906, when he moved to Gettysburg College. Efforts were made more than once to persuade him to return, but except for teaching in summer school during several sessions he refused the invitations.

A mainstay of the faculty for many years came to Collegeville in 1907 in the person of John Wentworth Clawson. Canadian by birth he was educated at the University of New Brunswick and Cambridge University, where he was a "wet bob." Before coming to Ursinus he taught at his alma mater and at Ohio State. For some years Dr. Clawson taught physics here and for a longer time astronomy, but his major interest was mathematics, in which his specialty was geometry. Almost immediately he was asked to serve as an assistant to Dean Kline in the recording and averaging of grades in the Dean's office. Knowing intimately through the years the work of that office he was the natural choice to succeed Dean Kline, who died in 1946, and he served as dean until his retirement in 1952. The Perkiomen had not quite the same atmosphere and associations as the Cam, but Dr. Clawson during his earlier decades here was often to be seen rowing on it. Shy, exact, laconic, he was gifted with a wry sense of humor which only his close associates knew and appreciated.

Still another stalwart who joined the faculty in this period was Calvin Daniel
Yost. After graduating as valedictorian of the class of 1891 he had studied in the School of Theology and at Yale Divinity School, been ordained, and served pastorates in Schuylkill, Bucks, and Chester Counties before being called to the service of his alma mater in 1907 as general secretary of the Reformed Evangelical and Educational Union, a promotional organization apparently intended to get money for Ursinus and the School of Theology, which from that year on was amalgamated in Central Theological Seminary. The Union was not a successful venture, but Dr. Yost's usefulness became apparent, and in 1910 Vice-president Omwake engaged his services as instructor in English and history and as librarian, succeeding Eleanor B. Price (he had been a student assistant in the library in his college and seminary days). He taught history for only three years and English only until the coming of Professor Martin W. Witmer in 1920. German, his real subject, he taught from 1913 until his death in 1942. Secretary of the Alumni Association from 1909 until 1936, a member of the Board of Directors from 1916 on and secretary from 1923 on, Dr. Yost was a factotum. Short, spare, mild-mannered, he had a schoolmaster's eye and permitted no nonsense as he shepherded generations of students through the mysteries of German paradigms and word order.

Certainly other faculty members of this era deserve mention, but a series of thumb-nail sketches may be prolonged to wearisome lengths. As was said before, a certain crude justice must be exercised for the sake of the reader, though it be injustice to those not memorialized.

An important academic change of a negative sort took place in this era—the reduction of Ursinus from a three-level institution (preparatory, collegiate, post-graduate) to a college only. As has already been told, the separation of the School of Theology began with its removal to Philadelphia in 1899 and ended with its union with Heidelberg Theological Seminary in 1907. Now the Academy, which was the oldest functioning part of the trio, succeeding Freeland Seminary without a break in 1869, was to disappear. Its demise came rapidly.

William Chandler, principal of the Academy since 1903 and a member of the Administrative Committee after President Ebbert's resignation, resigned his position in January, 1909. James W. Riddle, Jr., the assistant principal, was appointed acting principal. At the winter meeting of the Board in February it was decided to separate the principalship from any teaching duties in the College and to make it a position devoted entirely to administration and development. The next step was the approval of the appointment of a committee to submit a plan for the removal of the Academy to a new site. Probably the reason for this proposed removal was that the space occupied by the Academy, both classrooms and dormitory, was needed for the College. After being smaller in numbers than the Academy since the beginning, it had now become larger, markedly so in the last years (1905–06, C 102, A 86; 1906–07, C 104, A 81; 1907–08, C 99, A 69; 1908–09, C 123, A 86), and it was to outstrip the Academy a little more in the last year of the Academy's existence (1909–10, C 135, A 96).

Assuming that the College would continue to grow, as it did, the administra-
tion had three alternatives: to build separate buildings for the Academy on the campus, to remove the Academy to another site, or to close it. The first alternative was not considered (at least the records do not show that it was). The College had plenty of land; in fact, it had just purchased part of what is now the east campus, twenty-two acres, from Dr. Spangler and his son George. But it had no money to build and was actually trying to find ways, again, to retrench. The second alternative was considered to the extent that the committee already authorized was appointed on November 9. This was a forlorn hope, for the cost of finding and purchasing another campus or even one suitable building would have been even higher than building an academy center here. Nothing came of the idea.

The third alternative was to close the Academy. The decision to do this was made at the winter meeting of the Board on February 8, 1910. The Committee on Government and Instruction in making the recommendation gave five reasons:

1. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, College Associations and other standardizing agencies discourage the conducting of preparatory schools by colleges.
2. The state is encouraging the development of high schools and it is now possible to prepare for college in public high schools in the more thickly settled communities.
3. The number of students attending Ursinus Academy has decreased in recent years despite special efforts made by advertising and canvassing to build up the school.
4. The College ought not to be in competition with preparatory schools elsewhere from which it might draw students, but should cultivate the most cordial relations with such schools and with the public school system.
5. Nearly all the present students in the Academy might be instructed and governed without a separate organization involving extra expense and difficult problems of administration.

The first reason cited was undoubtedly influential. The third seems a little shaky in view of the fact that the enrollment of 96 in 1909-10 almost matched the 98 in 1900-01. That the Academy had a faculty of eleven in its last year of operation, though six of them taught also in the College and three were undergraduate part-time instructors, suggests that almost a hundred students at $60 per year were not enough to make the operation self-sustaining. Of course, the College itself was running at a deficit, as it always had, but it was growing and after the depression year of 1907 its prospects were slowly getting brighter. In 1910-11 the enrollment was 169 and in 1911-12 180. In the long view the decision was correct, and with the closing of the Academy secondary preparation which had been conducted without a break since 1848 came to an end.

Oddly enough, at the same time that the College was divesting itself of the School of Theology and the Seminary, an attempt was made to create another coordinate school. This can best be summarized in the statement in the 1908-09 catalog:
Instruction in music has been offered in Ursinus College ever since its founding in 1869. Until 1908 the work in music was organized as the Department of Music, but was tributary to the other departments in the College. In September, 1908, the Department of Music was elevated to a rank co-ordinate with the College and the Academy as departments of the institution. In December, 1908, it was officially designated by the Board of Directors as the Ursinus School of Music.

There were two instructors, John Myron Jolls, who was to continue as the leader of the glee clubs and chorus for many years, and Anna Pearl Riddle. Courses were offered in sight singing, harmony, counterpoint, musical forms, the history of music, etc. Hopefully the project was to develop into a full-fledged college conservatory like that at Oberlin.

It did not develop very much. Seventeen students were enrolled the first year, sixteen the second, twenty-five the third, and twenty-nine the fourth. But the figures are deceptive, for most of the students so listed were regular college students taking a course or two in music. In 1912 the School of Music disappeared.

The only other purely academic change, of a different order, was the decision of the Executive Committee in March, 1909, that the faculty should double the courses in English Bible and prescribe them for all students. Study in religion, even such elements as Christian apologetics, had always been a prescribed part of the curriculum. Now each student was required to study a full year of Old Testament and a full year of New. This requirement continued in effect until the late 1930's.

During the years from 1904 to 1912 no major building was erected. In 1908 the President's House, then empty, was turned into a dormitory for the women college students and Olevian was given over to resident girl students in the Academy. By a gift of $5,000 from Israel Shreiner it became possible to increase the size of the President's House, or College House as it was momentarily called (the L shaped building was made a rectangle by filling in the south corner), and it was named Shreiner Hall in 1909 in recognition of this gift.

Earlier in 1909 the Board purchased a plot of twenty-two acres from former President Henry T. Spangler and his son George. This comprised the land immediately east of Bomberger and back toward the Perkiomen, i.e., the east campus where the former Alumni Memorial Library and the Administration Building now stand; the back campus, including the site of Beardwood, Paisley, and Stauffer Halls, the dispensary, the heating plant (where for many years there was an old barn), the Effie Brant Evans Field, and the sewage disposal plant. At the time that the College took possession the only buildings on the area were the house soon to be called Sprankle Hall and its barn. Until 1900 Prospect Terrace had stood in front of where the Library now is, but it burned that year, leaving only a mass of rubble. The Weekly immediately called for a beautification of the new property, describing the land immediately east of Bomberger as a “plowed field, beautified by nothing more inspiring than a heap of ruins.” The price set for the whole plot, then known as the Prospect Terrace property and the Laros property, was $16,000. The Board
wished to purchase it for $14,500 but apparently (the minutes do not record the actual acquisition) paid the asking price.

The College had $6,500 in mortgages on one of the properties and was given $6,000 by Henry M. Housekeeper and $2,000 by the widow of Samuel Sprankle, in whose memory the Laros house was named Sprankle Hall. The financing is here detailed because otherwise it would be hard to reconcile this purchase with the fact that at the Board meetings of this period several messages were received from the faculty requesting immediate payment of arrearages in salary. In the long view the Board’s decision was right.

The two buildings erected in this era were the Field House and the Field Cage (gymnasium). When John B. Price returned to Ursinus in 1908 as athletic director and instructor in the Academy, he immediately revived the project started in his undergraduate days of erecting a building to house shower and locker facilities for the athletic squads and an office for the coach. The idea had the approval of alumni

The Field House, built in 1909, housed shower and locker facilities for the athletic squads and an office for the coach. It was built with support from alumni and students involved in a rapidly developing inter-collegiate athletic program.
The Field Cage, built behind the Field House in 1910, provided the first facilities for indoor practice, especially for basketball, which up to this time had to be played outdoors.

interested in athletics and some members of the Board, notably J. T. Ebert, who was elected to the Board in 1907 and made treasurer in 1910. Coupled with it was the project of having a suitable, properly graded athletic field and track. At the winter meeting on February 11, 1909, Mr. Ebert, speaking for the Committee on Athletics, requested that action be taken on the proposal and a delegation of students appeared before the Board to support it. There had been funds gathered for this purpose in 1903–04 (the Weekly reported pledges of over $600 in November, 1903), so the Board approved the project on the understanding that the Committee on Athletics would secure the additional funds needed.

This was done. Plans for the Field House were approved, work was begun late in the spring, and the building was formally opened on October 16. It is incorporated in the Thompson-Gay Gymnasium (built in 1927) as the locker and shower room nearest to Patterson Field.

Now the athletic teams had a place to dress and shower in but no facilities for indoor practice, especially for basketball, which up to this time had to be played outdoors. An attempt was made to rent the Glenwood Hall pavilion, but without success. So the Athletic Committee projected the erection of the Field Cage. This project, too, was approved by the Board but brought to completion by the efforts of Jack Price and the students, alumni, and friends interested in athletics. The students did the excavation work and the building was completed by the end of the year. Before construction began, a tragic happening gave the project a special interest for the student body. On March 7, Robert W. Thompson, a star athlete in the
Thompson-Gay Gymnasium, amalgamating new construction with the Field House and Field Cage in 1927, provided showers and lockers for women, a grandstand, and a stage for plays. It was named in honor of two student athletes who died tragically.

senior class, choked to death in the East Dining Hall (the training table). He suffered from a paralysis of the glottis, following a severe case of diphtheria a few months earlier. At a mass meeting on April 17, the students passed a motion that the building about to be erected be named the Robert W. Thompson Memorial Field Cage. The Board approved, but though made official the name did not catch on until the enlargement in 1927, when it was called the Thompson-Gay Gymnasium, memorializing also another athlete, George Henry Gay, who died of a broken neck suffered in a non-college game on November 4, 1913.

In 1910 a proposal was made to build a new dining hall in the old college complex, to make repairs to the three buildings, to remodel them in part, and to put on a new portico. At the same time it was decided, since the Academy was now closed, to call the central building, in which it had been housed, Freeland Hall. The project was approved but not carried out until 1913, when it became the first major achievement of President Omwake's administration.

During the whole of this second interim period the most constant and difficult problem of the administration was, as it had always been, financial. In his report as dean in the fall of 1906 Dr. Omwake noted the enlarged enrollment (103 students), an increase of 75% in the last five years, the larger number of women students (26 in 1906 as compared to 7 in 1901), and the excellent quality of the faculty, but he had also to lament the large turnover because of low salaries, which, low as they were, were irregularly and incompletely paid. With monotonous regularity single members or groups of the faculty complained to or petitioned the Board. If salaries were
low, tuition charges were proportionately lower. The College kept running further and further in debt because it priced its product below its income and because, out of the best of motives, it granted scholarship aid which it did not have the endowment to sustain.

A few statistics will illustrate the situation. In February of 1906 the “floating debt”, i.e., the accumulated deficits of yearly operations, was $34,228. Two months later it was $35,340. At the conclusion of the year’s business the treasurer reported that the year’s operation had ended with a current surplus of $1,619, but the total indebtedness, including the “floating debt”, was $18,179. In the following year there was again a small surplus for the year’s operation, but the total indebtedness was only slightly lowered, to $17,407, and faculty salaries were still in arrears. In 1908 the income from the endowment, then totalling $183,475, was only $1,645, because the income from the Patterson Fund was earmarked for the charges on the bonded indebtedness. Meanwhile the total liabilities rose to $134,475. Thus the situation continued. What was needed was an increase in student fees, an increase in endowment the income of which was available for current expenditures, and the elimination of the “floating debt.” All of these came in time, but slowly; the current deficit, or “floating debt”, was not finally erased until several years after World War II.

Money, or the lack of it, was ever in the forefront of the administrative mind. For the students it was a less pressing problem, except in terms of meeting personal bills. Their life seemed gayer than it had been a few years earlier, though perhaps unsophisticated and even bucolic to modern viewers of it. The increasing numbers of women students made life more interesting, as did the gradual relaxation of the social standards. Dancing was unheard of, and in fact frowned on, until the early years of the twentieth century. One of the first authorized dances, if not the first, was held at Glenwood Pavilion in May 1904. “A program consisting of waltz, two-step, and schottische was indulged in.” The Weekly called it a “delightful affair” and added that “more of like nature should be given to promote social life and at the same time dispel the hum drum existence of a college man.” A year later a Junior Prom was held at Glenwood. “This social function was an innovation and a successful one at that.” Dancing was from nine until two, a later hour than is allowed today.

Dances remained rather rare and were not held in College buildings, however, for some years, reappearing as events to make money for the Athletic Association when the campaigns to build the Field House and Field Cage were on. The centers of extra-curricular life were still the literary societies with their Friday evening meetings. But they now were supplemented by the taffy pulls, fudge parties, and teas given by the girls of Olevian and Shreiner, by jaunts to football games in a tally-ho, trips to Philadelphia or Norristown by train or trolley (Collegeville was accessible by trolley from 1896 on), and by various forms of class rivalry. The tradition of the sophomores kidnapping the president of the freshman class and keeping him from attending the Freshman Banquet dated back at least to 1906. And there
was always the pleasure of improvised high jinks like stealing the refreshments provided for a “shine” or unscrewing all the seats in the chapel or stacking the books in the library (in 1913 the long-suffering librarian had to rearrange and put back the collection three times). Students can always find something to do that authorities frown on; the Executive Committee resolved in 1909 that “the Board does not approve of the keeping of dogs in the buildings or on the grounds of the College.”

Long before the perennial question had been posed on the Ursinus scene the Board had forbidden the formation of fraternities and sororities, not to meet the threat of such ephemeral and light-hearted organizations as the Bachelor’s Club formed in 1890. A debate in Schaff, “Resolved that Ursinus College is justified in her opposition to fraternities,” was decided affirmatively in 1896. By 1906 the atmosphere had changed. Another debate in Schaff, “Resolved, that fraternities are beneficial to small colleges,” received an affirmative vote of the house. A month earlier the Charmidean Club, limited to sixteen seniors and juniors, had been organized. A year later a similar club for women, Phi Alpha Psi, was organized (when local sororities were permitted in the 1930’s this was reinstated). And a second men’s fraternity, Alpha Omega, formed in 1911. This apparently caused alarm, and the Board, citing its law of 1892, discontinued the fraternities or social clubs then in existence.

During their brief existence the Charmideans and the others had “shines”, an Ursinus localism meaning a festive party. Gradually the nature of it changed to a dance, and by the early twenties the great social events of the year were the Frosh-Junior and Soph-Senior shines, in which the lower class entertained its upper-class ally at a dance for which the Field Cage was elaborately decorated. The distinctive name died when the class of ’30 presented the first Junior Prom of modern times in 1929.

Dramatics became very important and popular from 1904 on, partly from the encouragement of Dr. Smith and his courses in Elizabethan drama, more from the enthusiasm and support of townspeople, in chief Mr. and Mrs. Frank W. Gristock and the Lane brothers, Edward and Granville, who painted scenery, directed, and acted with students in such productions as Sheridan's The Rivals in 1906, Shaw’s Arms and the Man in 1907, Lewis’s The Bell in 1909, and Sheridan Knowles' Virginius in 1911. Shakespeare had his due when Othello was presented in 1912 as the Schaff 42nd anniversary play. Schaff had become the society interested in dramatics, and all the plays cited were anniversary productions. Play rehearsals provided opportunities for friendship beyond the controlled social behavior of the time. One could become friendly with an actor of the other sex. “Othello” and “Desdemona” were reprimanded for “disorderly conduct” in the library two months after the performance.

Playlets and skits were popular in the regular meetings of the societies and of the groups and clubs as well. Probably the most frequent and popular was the mock faculty meeting. For over a quarter of a century, if they could think of nothing else,
students would work up an extempore skit parodying the mannerisms and stock phrases of the faculty, starting with the president and the dean.

While the religious cast of college life was perhaps not as all pervasive as in the first decades, it was strong and active. The YMCA worked in freshman orientations as it had in the nineties and yearly published its handbook, the “Freshman Bible” as it was called for many years. The Y had prayer meetings, Bible study, deputation work. A change in the vocational aims of the students showed itself in the formation of the Brotherhood of St. Paul in 1905 “to promote the interests of the ministerial calling among the students.” Ten years earlier so many of the students were pre-ministerial that such an organization would have been superfluous. The increase of women students in the 1900’s prompted the suggestion of forming a female auxiliary to the Y. Instead the YWCA was formed in January, 1908, with Rhea Duryea (Johnson) ’08 as first president. The two Y’s remained quite separate until a play given together signaled the first effort at joining forces.

An important development in student life in this era was the creation of a student government association. Discipline had always been the province of the faculty, and order was maintained in the dormitories by teachers who lived in them as proctors. The efficiency of the system varied with the conscientiousness and good sense of the proctors. As early as 1904 an editorial in the Weekly commenting on “recent trouble” in the dorms suggested self-government as a solution. A later editor favored it as a means of curbing students who damaged property and threw water bags and the like. The initiative was taken by the presidents of the predominantly male Groups in the spring of 1911. They decided to form a committee of twenty members, four elected members plus the president ex officio of each Group. The women students were not involved because “for the attainment of the object for which this committee was formed it was not necessary that they be represented.” The Senate was elected two weeks later, on a temporary basis. The constitution and permanent organization were completed at the beginning of the fall term, when it was made clear that this was to be for men only “because of the fact that the ladies are under special rules coming from the college authorities.” Formation of the women’s student government did not come for half a dozen years after. The Senate was organized and went into operation on November 9, 1911 with Walter R. Douthett ’12 as its president. Its first job was to find out who among the freshmen class had been painting class numerals (’15) about the town, the class having promised not to do this. A few weeks later it had to cope with “acts of vandalism” around Olevian Hall. The Student Government Association discovered at the outset that democracy is not easy.

Although the records do not suggest that this was an especially turbulent or lawless time, perhaps student morale suffered because the years from 1905 to 1908 were an ebbtide in athletics. In both baseball and football the seasons were poor, little encouragement was given to athletes, at times there was no coach. Everything seemed to conspire against the teams. The football team in 1907 had to be picked from a squad of seventeen men. There was no scrimmage, for there were not
enough men to form a scrub team, and Ursinus was lucky to win three games out of seven. In baseball all sorts of hardship had to be met; witness the season of 1907:

Owing to the fact that Easter came earlier than usual, the trip through the Cumberland Valley was taken the week following. We were unfortunate in selecting the weather, and three of the games were played in snowstorms. . . . One pitcher is not enough for a large schedule. . . . A serious drawback to putting out a skilled team early in the season is the lack of a suitable place for indoor practice. . . . The absence of a coach has been another weakness. . . . To expect a manager to make a first-class diamond out of clay and stones is like trying to make bricks without straw.

The team won five out of fourteen that spring.

This sad state of affairs brought demands for a graduate coach and the Board responded by electing John B. Price '05 Athletic Director. He had coached very successfully at Slippery Rock State Normal School since graduation. Back at his alma mater "Jack" at once directed his fiery energies to restoring Ursinus' athletic prowess to the level enjoyed in his undergraduate days when he was a star in both major sports. The Board was asked to appoint a committee to "devise ways of helping worthy students by finding work for them or obtaining contributions", i.e., help athletes. And a few months later Mr. Price was deputed to canvass for students. Even before this recruiting began, the effects of his contagious desire to win were seen, for the 1908 football team won seven out of ten and 1909 was a banner year: seven victories out of eight, and the single loss to the University of Pennsylvania. That defeat was wiped out the following year when Penn was one of the six teams who bowed to the Red, Old Gold and Black, and only Lafayette topped Ursinus 10-0. Succeeding seasons did not keep up to this high level, but all in all it was a halcyon time. The record in baseball was equally gratifying: seven out of eleven in 1909, the last four all shutouts; ten out of sixteen in 1910; eleven out of fifteen in 1911.

Tennis and track remained largely intra-mural sports, although occasionally a relay team or a runner might represent Ursinus at the Penn Relays. Some effort was made to introduce basketball, but until the Field Cage was built there was no floor on which it could be played.

All the extra-curricular activities which have been sketched in the preceding pages and many others were recorded and commented on in the Weekly, which was for that time a free and fairly uninhibited student paper. Its editorial page reflected student opinions and desires at times in a strangely modern vein. In 1907 an editorial asked for a reception room or lounge in the men's dormitory, a need felt sixty years later. A few months later the suggestion was made that Ursinus petition for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, and this is still to seek. The Weekly was, of course, strongly in favor of the movement to build the Field House and later the Cage. An editorial in February of 1910 berated student indifference and lack of support for campus organizations, i.e., apathy, a chronic complaint. Another a few months later declared that student life was overorganized; there were too many clubs, teams, socie-
ties, and these were supported by too few students. On the other hand student editors deplored the conservative views of their elders. A chapel speaker who condemned “loitering in the halls and the impropriety of taking a lady’s arm while escorting her” was roundly berated. In view of contemporary concern about communication it is interesting to find an editorial commending Vice-president Omwake for informing the student body about actions taken by the Board: “this openness and assurance that something is being done to improve conditions helps students’ morale and the College in general.”

A few other events, not unimportant in themselves but not easily categorized with what is already recorded, must close this chapter on the years from 1904 to 1912. On February 11, 1909 the custom of annually celebrating Founders Day was begun. The idea of this observance had been suggested in 1892, but nothing had come of it. Because the original Board of Directors had organized itself under the just granted charter on February 10, 1869 and because Lincoln’s birthday was the 12th, the Founders Day committee decided to split the difference and make it a dual celebration. So at the first Founders Day the Rev. James W. Meminger ’84 eulogized Abraham Lincoln, and the Rev. David E. Klopp, sole survivor of the ministers who participated in the movement to found Ursinus, spoke on the events of forty years back. The patriotic element was dropped in succeeding Founders Day convocations, but the February time was kept until President McClure’s administration when the time was changed to early November to avoid inclement weather.

At the beginning of this chapter the history of the presidency was recorded. Near the close of the era another change in leadership not so conspicuous but of great significance to the College occurred. Henry W. Kratz, who had been a member of the original Board of Directors and who was its president from 1873 on, resigned his office in 1910. He was old and in poor health and had in fact resigned in 1906 but was persuaded not to give up the office at that time. As his successor the Board elected a comparative newcomer, Harry E. Paisley. Mr. Paisley had been elected to the Board in 1907. An official of the Reading Company and a prominent layman in Trinity Reformed Church, Philadelphia, Mr. Paisley was to have a tenure of office rivalling that of Henry Kratz and to bring to his position a devotion to the College’s best interests and a canny Scottish sense of finance that were to be of enormous help to President Omwake and his successors.