Chapter 7

PRESIDENT OMWAKE’S FIRST YEARS (1912 – 24)

George Leslie Omwake was inaugurated as president on October 7, 1913. In his inaugural address he announced no innovations: “here we come not heralding ‘radical’ reforms or revolutionary measures.” And he amplified this point thus:

Our task is rather to build on the foundations already laid—to steadily bring into clearer relief our dominant ideals and purposes, to work out in more specific detail our fundamental principles of organization and administration, and to bring all available power to bear in the production of larger and better results. Consequently, there will be no sensations, no pyrotechnics in this administration unless they are shot up unawares.

The reason why Dr. Omwake did not promulgate a course of action for the College at this time was that he had already done so eight years earlier. As a very young dean, speaking for the faculty at the inauguration of President Ebbert, he said in reviewing the Spangler administration just ended that it has been devoted to the cultivation of ideals, the establishment of standards, organization for more efficient work—in short, to the development of internal power. As an institution, we stand upon a firm foundation, and in the last ten years we have grown very much, but we have grown tall and thin. It is time now to fill out.

In other words, the College had progressed intellectually but not materially, at least in any commensurate rate. Therefore the chief task of the immediate future was to bring to the institution better financial support, larger patronage, and more extended influence—this is our plain duty in the epoch immediately before us.
In his address as dean at the inauguration of President Keigwin in 1907, Dr. Omwake did not refer to this "plain duty", but in the conclusion of his own inaugural address, after expressing his hope that Ursinus could keep its financial charges low enough to "command the patronage of self-supporting students and those of limited means," he went on to say that the College must secure greater funds to maintain its "growing work." This, he stated, was the task of the directors, but assistance, and perhaps even leadership, in promoting the temporal welfare of an institution may rightly be expected of its president. It is through the president that benefactors may get impressions of the worth of the college and become acquainted with its needs, . . .

The history of his administration will demonstrate the truth of his assertion.

President Omwake has appeared so prominently in the preceding chapter of this history that an account of his education and professional career may seem superfluous at this point. But everything about the man who directed and built Ursinus for three decades is of significance. George Leslie Omwake was born in Greencastle, Pa., in 1871. He was graduated from the State Normal School at Shippenburg in 1893 and from Mercersburg Academy in 1895. After graduating from Ursinus in the class of 1898, of which he was salutatorian, he went to the Divinity School of Yale University, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in 1901. He was licensed but never ordained in the ministry of the Reformed Church. He returned to Ursinus that year as lecturer in education, and his executive powers were almost immediately called upon, for in 1903, upon Dean Weinberger's retirement, he was named dean and professor of the history and philosophy of educa-
tion, a subject which he had studied in Yale graduate school. The change to the office of vice-president in 1909 and the fact that he was the executive officer from 1906 on have already been recorded. It might be well to add that Dr. Omwake's devotion to Ursinus was demonstrated by his refusal in 1910 of the deanship at Pennsylvania State College.

Influential as he became in the councils of higher education (he was one of the founders, and president in 1918, of the Association of College Presidents of Pennsylvania) and in the Church (he was one of the most prominent lay leaders in the Forward Movement of the Reformed Church and chairman in 1926-7 of the World Alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches), Ursinus was central in all his endeavors. He was editor and co-author of the *J.H.A. Bomberger Centenary Volume* (1917) and the *Forward Movement Handbook* (1920), and alumni of the years he was at Ursinus will remember with great affection the words written for them in "The Dean's Column" (after 1912 "The Tower Window"), a column he wrote for the *Weekly* from 1908 until his health began to fail in 1934. Ranging from serious disquisitions on current educational issues of the College and the nation to graceful essays on trivia, the President from time to time recorded much of Ursinus' history in "The Tower Window." He was equally effective as a public speaker whether in prepared address or extemporaneous remarks.

Although he perforce worried over the College's problems, and worry and overwork repeatedly brought on periods of ill health, President Omwake was, as a good president must be, of a sanguine and optimistic temperament, constantly pressing forward to improve Ursinus as much as its resources would allow. The financial condition of the College at his election continued to be grave. On a total current budget of $78,783 there was a deficit of $24,070. Endowment was reported as $215,000, a drop of $16,000 from a few years back. The total liabilities were $192,748. On the other hand enrollment was up to 178, thirteen more than the preceding year, and the campus morale was good. Dean Kline reported that

There was no hazing this fall, no painting or defacing of property and no horse-play such as characterized the opening of school prior to last fall. This change has been brought about by the system of self-government inaugurated about three years ago.

There were no pressing problems in faculty recruitment, and on the domestic side, after a seemingly endless procession of stewards and managers of the boarding department, Mrs. Emma E. G. Webb was employed and served until her tragic death in 1932. An equally faithful and even more valuable employee of the College was Miss Sara Ermold, who was hired as office secretary in 1910 and became assistant treasurer in 1913, a position she filled with the greatest fidelity until her retirement in 1942. Her mother, Mrs. Ella Ermold, served for much of the same period as preceptress of Olevian and later of Fircroft, which the Ermolds gave to the College, and as superintendent of dormitories. And not to be forgotten as a campus figure.
for years to come was Tom Elliot, a tall, lean, taciturn, grumpy Orangeman from County Antrim in Ireland, the one man campus crew and janitor.

President Omwake’s first project was the remodeling of the men’s dormitories which had been proposed in 1910. There were no funds available so the members of the Board made themselves responsible to find $3,000 monthly for five months, and the alumni were asked to contribute. The contract went to F. L. Hoover & Son, who were later to build the Alumni Memorial Library and Pfahler Hall, on a cost-plus contract and the work was done rapidly, though college had to be opened late to ensure completion of the work done inside.

The remodeling included a complete interior renovation, the installation of electricity and proper toilet and bathing facilities on all floors. The dining rooms were rebuilt and the center one, known after 1927 as the lower dining room, was named in honor of Israel and Lizzie Shreiner. A large new kitchen was built at the lower level, filling in the quadrangle behind the group of buildings, its flat roof forming a court onto which three rear doors led from the three buildings of the group—Derr, Freeland and Stine. The exteriors were also refurbished, the principal changes being a new cupola for Freeland and the impressive columned portico so long a landmark of the campus. This was the last part of the remodeling to be completed, in December of 1913. The project cost more than expected, approximately $35,000, but it was entirely necessary.

The central building had been named Freeland Hall in 1910 upon the closing of the Academy. Now the East Wing was named Derr Hall as a memorial to Rev. Levi K. Derr, Hon. ’93, and the West Wing was named Stine Hall in memory of Daniel Stine, whose daughter, Mrs. Augustus Kaub, was a benefactor of the College. The three halls were razed in November, 1968, to clear the site for the erection of Myers Library.

In the spring of 1914 Mrs. Sara Super, widow of Henry W. Super, died and by her death Superhouse and an endowment of $20,500 came to the College. After renovation, the building was occupied in 1916 by President Omwake and his family.

After the modernization of the old dorms and the acquisition of Superhouse, the only major property changes before World War I were the acquisition of the double house on Sixth Avenue and the pipe organ in Bomberger Hall, both in 1916. The house was the combined gift of H. M. Housekeeper of Trinity Church, Philadelphia, and Abram Grater of Trinity Church, Norristown, and was therefore named Trinity Cottage, still its official name, but it was soon called South Hall and has been known by that name ever since. It was used as a women’s dormitory, and in theory as an infirmary with Mrs. Carl V. Tower, wife of the professor of philosophy, as preceptress, because she was a registered nurse.

The Charles Heber Clark memorial organ was installed in Bomberger as the gift of Mr. Clark’s widow. Now almost forgotten, Charles Heber Clark was a successful journalist and writer of humor under the pen name of “Max Adeler”, who had died in 1915. The organ, a two manual Haskell, served the College well
Freeland Hall portico was completed in 1913 as the final stage of a remodeling of Freeland, Stine, and Derr, including electricity, modern plumbing, and new dining rooms. These buildings were razed in 1968 to make way for the Myrin Library.
until fumes from the chemistry laboratory in the basement finally corroded its
contacts beyond repair.

One diminution of property might be noticed. The Board sold to Winfred
Landes out of the property bought from the Spanglers in 1909 the land overlooking
Bum's Hollow and the railroad where the College Arms Apartments complex now
stands. The consideration was $150 and a right of way!

The chief immediate change in academic affairs was the abandonment in 1914
of graduate instruction on President Omwake's recommendation. This was in a
sense the final step in the College's slow course toward becoming a single purpose
institution, and certainly a wise one, for Ursinus had at no time the resources in
faculty and library to give adequate graduate training. Nor was there a demand for
this training sufficient to warrant its continuance. In 1911–12, there were four
M.A.'s in course, in 1912–13 none, and in 1913–14 one.

The students became enthusiastic this year for the adoption of the honor sys­
tem, which Weekly editors had advocated from time to time during the last decade.
At a “spirited mass meeting” they “adopted” the honor system to go into effect
beginning in September. When September came final action by faculty and stu­
dents had not been taken. In the showdown the students voted 9 to 65 not to adopt
it because as proposed it made the reporting of fellow students' dishonesty a man­
datory act.

Changes were made in the student government association, but not to the
satisfaction of all, particularly some of the coeds, who felt, quite rightly, that the
association legislated in matters for them without their having any voice. Perhaps
more pressing was the fact that despite Dean Kline's report that the student govern­
ment had eliminated hazing, hazing continued and inter-class clashes were fre­
quent. Fights over painting class numerals and over ringing Freeland bell after
frosh-soph games were frequent and at times bloody. Nobody really wanted these
accepted forms of mayhem eliminated. The only question was how to prevent
excess.

Although World War I began in 1914, its impact on American life and Ameri­
can colleges was somewhat delayed. Not until late in 1916 was there any evidence
that the shadow of world conflict was darkening the Ursinus campus. References to
the war in the Weekly were sparse, and there is no report of men leaving college to
enlist in the armed forces before February of 1917. Life went on as usual, though
there seemed to be a more serious attitude in the student body. Athletics did not
arouse the feverish enthusiasm of a few years back.

In April, 1917, the Faculty sent a resolution to Congressman Henry Watson
favoring a defensive war, if war was inevitable, and pledging its support of what­
ever course the Federal government might take. At the same time a petition for the
institution of military training, signed by a hundred male students, was presented
to the College authorities. President Omwake acted immediately. Captain
Romanus Fellman, Second Pennsylvania Field Artillery, was appointed head of the
Department of Military Training, and military training was begun.
The Junior Glee Club, pictured in the 1913 Ruby, provides a glimpse of the informal side of extra-curricular life.

Collegeville station, on the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, provided easy access for students to the cultural life of Philadelphia and the world beyond.
A drill session every afternoon at 4:00, Monday through Friday, was instituted. By the time another week had passed, the remainder of the baseball schedule was cancelled, military drill was made compulsory, and class schedules were rearranged so that all male students could participate.

In the first flush of America's entry into the war these measures did not satisfy many young men. By May, twenty-seven men had passed army or navy physicals, and most of them had enlisted. President Omwake felt it necessary to cool this precipitate military ardor by telling the students, as did his fellow college presidents in Pennsylvania, that they could serve the country best by staying in college and completing as much of their course as they could before being called to the colors. He anticipated that enlistment and the draft would greatly decrease enrollment, and also that some would volunteer who were too young or had physical deficiencies that would keep them out of the first drafts.

Some heeded this advice, more did not. In September, 1917, the enrollment was 162 (92 men and 70 women), a 26% decrease in men. The effects of the war were felt in other ways as well. Measures were taken to cut consumption of heat and light: the library hours were curtailed, the laboratories in Bomberger were not used, vespers services were discontinued, and the arch-rival literary societies met in joint session. In February, 1918, the Faculty adopted a plan increasing the length of classes so that the College could close a month (actually three weeks) earlier than originally scheduled and thus release faculty and students sooner for work to help the war effort.

At the Board meeting on May 13 it was moved and ordered that the study of German be made optional, and that provisions be made for instruction in Spanish and Italian, so that two modern languages may be required of students heretofore.” This action reflected the animus against everything German that swept the country and caused many colleges to abandon the teaching of German altogether. That this did not happen at Ursinus was due to the efforts of Calvin D. Yost. Nothing of this sort was thought of in 1941-5.

By the time the fall term had begun, the Ursinus unit of the Student Army Training Corps, under the command of Lieutenant Stanley Wohl, was authorized, to be activated on October 1, the standard date throughout the country. It was to run initially for two three-month terms, and special courses in military science, map-making, and sanitation were to be given. Interestingly, men in the unit who had been studying German were to continue this study.

At Ursinus the SATC consisted of two platoons of 48 each, who were in uniform by the middle of October. But the program had hardly got into full swing when the war ended. In the beginning of December the decision to demobilize was made, and the process was complete by December 21. The SATC had a short and hardly glorious career of two months. Its demise was not lamented. It had been viewed as a form of favoritism by those whose sons were not in college and were thus subject to immediate draft. By them the initials were interpreted to mean “Safe at the College.” But if the war had continued longer, it might have provided as
effectual a program to train men for the long term needs of the nation as the comparable programs in World War II.

Apparently the College profited from its SATC contract with the Army, for the Board was anxious to have it continue through the next year (1919). In response to a letter from faculty members pointing out the great rise in cost of living created by the war and asking that professional salaries be increased to $1,800 a year, the Board voted a 20% bonus to be paid in five monthly installments if the SATC contract continued.

Although the United States was in the war for nineteen months, mobilization was so slow that many of the men who had been drafted or who enlisted were in the service for only a year or less. Consequently, if lucky in being discharged early, they could resume their college course and be graduated only a year later than they normally would have been. There was no G.I. Bill on the scale of that enacted after World War II, but because the war was comparatively brief, there was not the large backlog of students produced in 1945. It is interesting to note that from 1873 to 1918 Ursinus had graduated six hundred and fifty-eight, including the women graduates from 1884 on.

Two hundred and seventy-one men students and alumni served in the armed forces in World War I. Of the two hundred and seventy-one, eight died in combat or in the service. In May of 1919 President Omwake proposed in the "Tower Window" that there should be a memorial to those men, but did not suggest the form it should take. A Weekly editorial the next week urged the need of a library building. At Commencement the President appointed a committee of fifteen alumni to formulate an appropriate memorial. During the summer the decision to build a library was reached, and the Board authorized the alumni committee to secure an architect. Frank R. Watson, of Watson, Edkins and Thompson, who as a young man had designed Bomberger Hall, was selected.

A vigorous campaign for funds was conducted by class solicitation, personal letters, and publicity in the Weekly during the next year. Oddly enough, before the contract had been let and even before the site of the new library had been chosen, a symbolic ground breaking took place in Bomberger Hall, because of rain, on June 8, 1920. By that time pledges of about $28,000 had been received. The general construction contract was given to F. L. Hoover & Son in September, three months after tentative plans had been approved. But construction did not begin until the next year when sufficient funds were in hand. The site, one hundred feet east of Bomberger with the front of the new building parallel with the front of Freeland, was picked on July 28, and work began at once. The cornerstone was laid on September 24, 1921, the first such ceremony at Ursinus since that of Bomberger Hall in 1891. By November the walls were nearing completion.

The Alumni Library Committee and the Board moved rather warily in this project because at the time it was begun building costs were high in the flush of the post-war boom and the campaign pledges did not amount to as much as was hoped. By February of 1922 the alumni had subscribed $37,000, and as of that time
the estimated cost of the building and equipment was $95,412, about $46,000 below bids of sixteen months earlier, for the boom had burst. The actual cost, when all was done, was just over $100,000. By that time the pledges had increased to $75,691, of which over $55,000 had been paid.

There was hope that an appeal to the Carnegie Corporation would yield a substantial amount of money. Neither this request nor one for library endowment made in 1923 produced any results. Another potential source of funds for the library and the general development of the College was the Forward Movement, a fund raising drive in the constituency of the Reformed Church spearheaded by the heads of the Church’s educational institutions. President Omwake was one of the leaders in the Forward Movement; he wrote much of its promotional literature and devoted most of his time in 1920–1 to it. The original amount allocated in prospect to Ursinus was $300,000. This allocation was doubled, but the amount received was far below expectations. By June of 1922 Ursinus received $73,200. Of this, little was allotted to the library.
The hundreds of alumni who span the years from the fall of 1923, when the Alumni Memorial Library opened its doors, to the misty October day in 1970 when those doors closed on the final borrower, will remember well the spacious reading room, its large windows, its walls lined with bookcases and hung with paintings, especially President McClure’s portrait facing Dr. Omwake’s across the full length of the room. At the time of its occupation the seating capacity was 96, an excellent provision, since the student body was about 300. For many years, men students were required to sit in the left half of the room, and women in the right. The strictness of this regulation was gradually eroded.

Beyond were the stacks, built to be closed, a common concept in the twenties. At the time of completion, only two tiers of stacks were installed. A third was added in 1949 when growth of the collection made it necessary. The planned capacity was 60,000 volumes. The collection first placed on the shelves totalled 18,000. By 1969, by dint of using all available space, overflowing into the basement and second floor, the library housed over 88,000 volumes.
To the left of the stacks were library workrooms, and a stairway leading to the rare book room, a scene of Board of Directors meetings for many years. To the right were two small classrooms, in later years used for the Head Librarian's office and an art reference room. A stairway here led to the museum, housing the Shaw-Bernard collection. In 1965 this gave way to the Reserve Book room, and the basement was renovated and filled with bookshelves, carrels and a Xerox machine, at a cost well over $5,000.

After almost fifty years of serving scholarship, will the Alumni Memorial Building have many more years serving the lighter side of student life? According to present plans a Student Union is at last to be realized within its walls.

The library was only the first stage in the expansion of the College's physical equipment which President Omwake had had in his mind for years and which was graphically represented in the "President's Dream" in the 1918 Ruby. But the realization of further stages of that expansion had to await the strengthening of the College's finances and the appearance of major benefactors. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," but the President never lost heart and in the second half of his administration was able to see some of his "dream" come true.

Colleges used to seem to each generation of students immutable. Still, however minutely, "E pur si muove", and some changes are of significance and interest. Not among the least of these is the coming of new professors who become seemingly permanent figures and have a large place in the life of the College.

In 1913 Carl Vernon Tower was elected professor of philosophy and psychology. A graduate of Brown with his Ph.D. from Cornell, Dr. Tower taught at Ursinus until his retirement in 1946. A genuine scholar who found it difficult to realize the distance between his powers of philosophic abstraction and those of many students, all of whom had to "take" a course in philosophy, he struggled manfully with the mixed bags of apprentice logicians and metaphysicians he faced each year. For some he was the classic figure of the absent-minded professor. Always a gentleman he leaned out of his "ivory tower" to greet with respect any sign of mind in his students.

A year later came William Wilson Baden. His doctorate was from Johns Hopkins, and he had studied for two years in Berlin, Rome, and Athens. Like Professor Tower a truly cultured man, Professor Baden was learned in both ancient and modern languages, teaching chiefly Greek and Spanish at Ursinus until his death in 1924. Among the students he was universally known as "Boots." Fond of walking, always with his cane in hand or held behind his back between bent elbows he was a familiar figure in Collegeville and its environs.

In a new field of instruction was Katherine E. Fetzer, who came to Ursinus in 1916 as director of physical training and instructor in public speaking for young women. The position Miss Fetzer filled and her presence in the faculty was the result of sponsorship by the Ursinus Women's Club, which began as the "Women Graduates Association" in 1914 and then opened its membership to faculty wives and other women interested in the College. Its first project was the establishment of...
The May Pageant, begun in 1919, was an Ursinus tradition. It featured elaborate choreography and costuming as well as the May pole and Queen. The sycamore tree in the background earned Ursinus a place in Ripley's *Believe It or Not* because it stood in the endzone of Patterson Field where football was played.

The instructorship named above, and the Club for several years underwrote the salary of the incumbent. Miss Fetzer was succeeded in 1918 by Agnes R. McCann, who began the program of intercollegiate athletics for women and also the May Pageant (the first one was presented on May 8, 1919, with Marion Jones '19 as Queen), produced each spring since then. The combination of athletic coach and speech instructor was an uneasy one and did not last long, but the course in public speaking and pageantry continued on its own well into the forties. The major in physical education was not instituted until 1930.

The creation of a new major, or group, in economics and business administration came with the election of Paul K. Edwards as assistant professor in 1922. Upon his resignation a year later James Lane Boswell was elected and served until his retirement in 1960. Professor Boswell, now an emeritus professor, was a Kentuckian trained at Georgetown College and the University of Pennsylvania in the pre-Keynesian days. The emphasis in the department as he developed it was primarily on economic theory, but the practical application of that body of principles was stressed more after Maurice O. Bone joined the department in 1930.
Another development, this time not of a major but of pre-professional training, was signaled by the election in 1919 of Paul Allen Mertz ’10 as assistant professor of education (and assistant to the president). As has been noted earlier, Ursinus had from the first decades prepared some of its graduates to teach in the high schools of Pennsylvania and adjoining states. Courses in pedagogy had been introduced into the curriculum in the nineteenth century. Even before he was dean or president, as well as after, Dr. Omwake had lectured on the history of education and methods of teaching. But Professor Mertz developed the program on the lines of currently emerging theories of teacher training. He introduced a course in educational testing, using the techniques of Binet and Terman which had been given national publicity by their use in the Army in the World War. He took classes on observation trips to local high schools.

Under his energetic leadership the program developed apace. In February of 1922 a group of fifteen students began a period of observation and practice teaching at Collegeville High School, anticipating a requirement for certification which the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction was to set up a year hence. Two years later the Department of Public Instruction issued provisional certificates to 57 Ursinus graduates. In terms of numbers the Ursinus group was 14th among the 47 institutions in the state to whose graduates certificates were granted under the new requirements. It should be noted that this certification was for high school teaching. In the 20’s, as for many years earlier, training for elementary school teaching was in the hands of the normal schools, soon to be called state teachers colleges, and few liberal arts colleges had programs in professional training for grade school teaching. Ursinus has never prepared students to qualify for elementary certification except in health and physical education, in which subject a dual preparation and certification is prescribed by the State.

Once put into operation the practice teaching program quickly became an established element of the College curriculum and of community life. The writer has vivid memories of being “practice taught” by Ursinus students in 1923–6. They were assigned to classes according to their major and occasionally, owing to the smallness of the local high school, practiced and learned their craft under teachers hardly more experienced than they. Despite this disadvantage, which the refinement and enlargement of the program was to eliminate, most became very competent teachers. The first generation of Ursinus teachers in this program is just at retirement age now.

Professor Mertz left the faculty in 1924, to be succeeded by John Peter McCoy, who in turn was followed by George Russell Tyson in 1927, another of the teachers who left a mark on many generations of Ursinus students. The teacher preparation program under Dr. Tyson grew upon this favorable beginning and continues as a central part of the College's work today.

The educational innovations of the post-war period, modest as they then seemed, all grew and prospered. Not so with every venture of the time. One that closed long since was the college farm. On the property purchased in 1909 from the
Spanglers was a stone barn, where the heating plant now is. The Board of Directors decided to renovate this barn, add a modern dairy stable and silo, and go into dairying and vegetable growing to supply the College's needs with, it was hoped, savings in food costs. Professional management was provided by securing the services in December, 1920, of Clarence E. McCormick, a Penn State graduate in agriculture and an experienced dairyman, as farm manager.

Under his direction a herd of pedigreed Holstein cows was purchased, and within a few years calves bred from this herd with resounding names like "Ursinus Samantha Pontiac Korndyke" grew to maturity, to produce milk for the student body.

The fields to the north of the campus drive paralleling Main Street were planted in vegetables or in crops for the feeding of the herd. The project was for a number of years a great favorite with President Omwake, and included the leasing of Captain Henry H. Fetterolf's farm (on both sides of Sixth Avenue down to the Run). Mr. McCormick and his family resided in Sprinkle Hall (now the Infirmary), which had earlier been occupied by a succession of faculty families.

But as time went on, the benefits did not match the expectations; it proved cheaper to purchase than to grow food, and some of the farmed area was needed for other purposes. After a protracted illness Mr. McCormick died. Enthusiasm for the farm also died, and in June, 1930, the Board decided to give up dairying. But the herd was not sold and the venture closed until February, 1936.

After that time the farm buildings were maintained under minimal repair as storage for furniture and whatever else needed to be kept somewhere, (including for a year or so [1939–40] Zachie, the bear cub who was the College's one living mascot), until they were torn down in 1963 to clear the site for the new heating plant.

In the post-war years life quickened on the campus. The prospect of the library building soon to be erected, the increase in enrollment, the additions to the faculty, the reawakening of intense interest in athletics—many signs pointed to a vital and more prosperous future for Ursinus. At the same time the heritage of the past was not forgotten, and past and future were the mingled strands in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Ursinus, which was celebrated on October 19 and 20, 1920. The stronger of these was the prospect of what was to be achieved in years to come, for as President Omwake observed in the "Tower Window" a day before the celebration it was to be an "exclusively forward looking program." In a time of transition it is the business of education to give first attention to the problems immediately at hand and to endeavor even to work ahead of the rapidly advancing forces of civilization in blazing the way for the new age.

On Tuesday evening the Board of Directors gave a dinner in honor of the College Presidents Association of Pennsylvania, at which addresses were made by Dr. James M. Anders, the prominent Philadelphia physician who was for many years a member of the Board of Directors, Alba H. Johnson, former president of Baldwin Locomotive Works and a member of the College's Advisory Board, and
Henry H. Apple, president of Franklin and Marshall College. At chapel the next morning, the only part of the celebration exclusively for the students, except for having a holiday, talks were given by President James H. Morgan of Dickinson College and Dean James H. Dunham of Temple University, who was for a few years a member of the Ursinus summer school faculty.

The anniversary celebration proper was held at 2:00 P.M., preceded by an academic procession from Olevian to Freeland, down the main path, along Main Street to Superhouse, and thence to Bomberger Hall, with a student escort marshalled by Donald L. Helfferich '21. The addresses were delivered by President Henry Churchhill King of Oberlin College on “The Educational Challenge of the Present World Situation” and President George W. Richards of the Theological Seminary at Lancaster on “The Function of the Christian College,” in which Dr. Richards largely corroborated what President Spangler had said in his inaugural address in 1894, that a Christian college is distinguished not by a distinctive curriculum but by the view of man and life that it imparts. Ten honorary degrees were conferred, among them the degree of Doctor of Science on Professor John Wentworth Clawson.

The anniversary celebration concluded with a public meeting of the Eastern Synod in Bomberger Hall, at which greetings and congratulations to Ursinus were given by six officials of the several instrumentalities of the Reformed Church. Everything went well, the weather was fine, the “academic procession was beautifully colorful, from the red freshman caps down thru the white files of pretty coeds to the black academic robes with their vivdly colored hoods,” and the celebration evoked, as Gilbert A. Deitz '18 commented in the Weekly, “a renewed joy in our College, her traditions, her present, and her bright future, a renaissance of loyal love and passionate patriotism.”

As a move toward that “bright future” the faculty undertook a general study of the curriculum to find ways in which it could be made more effective. As a result of this study the group system was left unaltered, but great flexibility was achieved by adopting the “semester hour” as the unit of study, in educational bookkeeping, instead of the course as heretofore. A natural consequence, so President Omwake stated, would be the creation of more half-year courses, which among other advantages would open the way for mid-year admissions. In fact, these changes did not bring mid-year entrants, and time has seen a move away from semester hour counting, though its plausible exactness still haunts students and administrators alike. A greater concern for practicality in education and the preparation for specific careers inspired the creation of the major in economics and business administration already noted.

The post-war years with their increase in enrollment increased the teaching load of faculty and compelled sectioning. One result of this was the coming to Ursinus of Martin Weaver Witmer in 1920, who from that year until his retirement in 1947 instructed generations of Ursinus students in the art of writing. A graduate of Franklin and Marshall College, he joined the faculty with a reputation as a
thorough grammarian in ten years of teaching at F. & M. Academy and as a strict disciplinarian. The reputation was well earned. Professor Witmer brought also an enthusiasm for debating, and he organized and managed for many years a high school debating league as well as coaching the Ursinus inter-collegiate debate teams.

The paramount emphasis placed by President Omwake and the faculty on thorough teaching and sound scholarship was recognized in 1921 when the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland of which the College had been a member since the founding of the Association, placed Ursinus on its first approved list. This regional accreditation came despite the fact that Ursinus notably lacked one of the eleven specifications set up by the Association, that a college should have at least $500,000 endowment. The Commission on Higher Education had “due regard for the fact that an institution falling below the desired standard in certain particulars may more than make good this lack of excellence in others.” Ursinus has thus been on the approved list since the Middle States Association engaged in accreditation, its position being reaffirmed after evaluations in 1957 and 1968.

Enrollment increased steadily from 1920 on, creating strains in classrooms and dormitories. The need for more classrooms was met in part by moving the chemistry laboratory from the second floor north corner of Bomberger to larger quarters in the basement underneath the eastern half of the chapel and Room 8. This move, in 1921, afforded the Chemistry Department a much larger laboratory and, of course, new equipment. The room vacated was turned into a lecture hall. On the other hand the new laboratory presented difficult problems in the venting of fumes and eventually took its toll when escaping corrosive agents caused deterioration of the console of the Clark Memorial Organ. Another gain in classroom space came through the occupation of the Alumni Memorial Library in 1923, which released Rooms 6 and 7 in Bomberger for classroom use.

Additional dormitory space, particularly for women, was obtained by purchasing or leasing houses in the town. This was an expedient, not a policy, for President Omwake and the Board had long had in mind the intention of building dormitories on the campus. But it was cheaper to buy houses contiguous to the campus than to build, especially since funds for a sizeable dormitory unit just weren’t in hand, and by buying a house the increase of the moment in enrollment could be housed. Once started the policy continued, and the College now owns sixteen houses, not counting Superhouse, Shreiner, and South, which antedate 1920. As time went on displeasure was voiced by townspeople on the ground that this policy was removing too much real estate from the tax rolls. The administration countered this objection by making a voluntary annual contribution to the borough.

The small residence halls have had disadvantages and advantages. They were and are less economical to maintain and require more personnel than larger units. Some students in the more distant ones have felt isolated from the campus. On the other hand many students have liked the small residential units, feeling that they
create a more intimate group, as in a fraternity house. A very real advantage for Ursinus has been that by ownership of nearly all property fronting the campus on Main Street, the College has been able to protect this part of the town from being commercialized, a protection that the borough zoning ordinance is supposed to give but doesn't.

The first such purchase was of Maples, next to Trinity parsonage, in 1923, for $5,000. The house was enlarged and remodeled at a cost of $6,900 and put in use as a women's dormitory housing thirty students. Prior to its purchase and enlargement it had been rented by the College since 1919. In purchasing it the College invested annuity funds, the annuities to be paid out of income from room rental. Thus in a modest way the Board initiated the policy to be largely expanded in later years of financing building construction or purchase by investment of its own funds rather than borrowing from outside sources.

The second purchase of this sort came a year later when the College bought the erstwhile Lewis Royer property in Trappe, a large house with almost eleven acres of ground, to be used for housing men students. As with Maples the purchase of this property, which the College called Highland Hall, was in part made possible by special gifts. In 1936 the College gave much of the acreage to the local school district, to be used as athletic fields by the new high school. And in 1944 it sold Highland Hall, the only property the College then owned in Trappe, to a private purchaser.

The increase in enrollment in the post-war years that necessitated these additions in classrooms and dormitories, modest as it may seem to later times, brought other changes. The proportion of women students in the total college population had been increasing steadily. In 1924 there were one hundred and fifty-four men, one hundred and nineteen women. President Omwake in commenting on this increasing ratio of women wrote that

Although Ursinus has been a co-educational college in principle for over forty years, and has been one in fact, so far as a considerable number of women students is concerned, for nearly twenty years, the institution, in its organization, kept almost wholly the form of a man's college.

To correct this administrative imbalance and to provide counsel and control adequate for this larger female group the Board created the office of Dean of Women, and to it elected Elizabeth Brett White in 1924.

Dr. White was not only the first dean of women but the first woman elected to professorial rank in the faculty as professor of history succeeding Professor Raymond B. Munson, who had resigned. Dr. White was a graduate of Cornell University who received her M.A. at the University of Wisconsin and her Ph.D. at Clark University. She came to Ursinus from Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham College), where she taught for ten years. Energetic, thorough, scholarly, Dr. White brought to her dual role a passion for efficiency and concern for people
and for truth that many alumni of both sexes will remember. She resigned the
deanship in 1938, to be succeeded by Camilla B. Stahr. As chairman of the Depart­
ment of History she continued until her retirement in 1947.

The motivation for creating the office of dean of women came in part from the
Ursinus Women’s Club, which had also been pressing for female representation on
the Board of Directors. Both desires of the Club were met, in the latter case initially
by the election to the Board in 1928 of Rhea Duryea Johnson ’08, who was in 1970
the second ranking member of the Board in seniority.

Increased enrollment also brought greater concern for the health of the college
community, resulting in the creation of the post of college physician. The first
incumbent was Dr. Ammon G. Kerschner ’12, who was elected in 1922 and resigned
a year and a half later, to be succeeded by Dr. John B. Price ’05, who held the post
for many years.

Campus life in the years from 1912 to 1920 was, except for the period of the war,
much as it had been in the first years of the century. Fraternities were forbid­
den, specialized clubs did not begin to form until after 1920, and since the enroll­
ment was still rather small, social life was centered in the activities of the classes, the
groups, and Zwing and Schaff. The only other organizations, apart from the Weekly
and Ruby staffs and the glee clubs, were the YM and YWCA and the Brotherhood
of St. Paul, which did not have as large a proportionate membership as in earlier
years because more and more men were planning to enter professions other than
the ministry.

Rivalry between Zwing and Schaff remained keen and usually friendly, al­
though an editorial in the Weekly in 1915 deplored it as a cause of disunion which
affected the athletic teams. Schaff continued its emphasis on dramatics, presenting
such plays as Richard III in 1913, The Lady of Lyons in 1915, Ruy Blas in 1916, and The
Dead Heart in 1917. By now dramatics had long lost the sinister reputation of the
nineteenth century. Before the war the tradition of having the Junior Class give the
second major dramatic production of the year began, and even the YWCA started to
put on plays. Skits and playlets, many of local authorship, continued as staples of
the weekly programs of Zwing and Schaff. Coaching was still largely in the hands
of the Lanes and the Gristocks until Gilbert A. Deitz ’18 joined the faculty as
instructor in chemistry after graduation and took on the coaching of dramatics.

From 1920 on the Junior Play tended to be a fairly frothy comedy or farce, but
Schaff began mounting romantic plays of a historic cast, with elaborate costuming
and staging, so far as the platform in Bomberger chapel would permit. The first of
this series was If I Were King, the 48th anniversary of Schaff in 1920, followed by
When Knighthood Was in Flower the next year, Sherwood (about Robin Hood) with
Eugene Michael ’24, later to be professor of education, in the male lead, in 1922, and
then for a change of pace a modern comedy, The Prince Chap, in 1923. These last
two were coached by William Gawthrop, who was from 1921 to 1925 instructor and
then assistant professor of chemistry.

Interest in athletics continued high, except during the war period, but Ursinus
teams were not so winning as those of the 1908–10 era. “Jack” Price resigned as athletic director and coach in 1914. The 1913 football season was rather unfortunate (six losses out of six, though all were by close scores except to Cornell and Lafayette), the squad was small (eleven men at the outset of the season) and Coach Price apparently felt that the support he wanted for his teams was not forthcoming from students, alumni, or administration. The baseball team did rather better, but this was not enough to assuage his feelings, and despite an “Athletic Conference” held on April 4, 1914, to make athletics as paramount in Ursinus as he desired, he resigned in June. Wesley Gerges ’14, who succeeded him, came into a situation where there was no way to go but up, and the football team won two out of nine in 1914.

It must be said that the death in November, 1913, of George Henry Gay from a broken neck suffered in a game he was playing as a member of a non-college club dampened enthusiasm for football. A Weekly editorial two weeks later listed injuries incurred by other Ursinus gridders of recent years or still in college and said “we are beginning to wonder if all this athletic glory and prestige has not cost us dearly.” The editorial went on to suggest that football be dropped and soccer introduced as a substitute. Ralph Mitterling ’15, a member of the varsity who was to return to Ursinus as coach in 1919, replied, defending football as entailing risks that all sports entail and decrying soccer as a substitute. “It will be,” he wrote, “another worthy sport for Ursinus. But it will not replace American football. It is too English.” The Athletic Committee met with a committee of the Board to discuss general athletic policy, and the combined committees agreed that football should be continued, with all possible safeguards, but that other sports such as basketball, “Association football” (soccer), and hockey should be provided to furnish “wider and more diversified opportunity.”

Whether soccer was in fact “too English” for Ursinus is in doubt, but it did not catch on. Basketball did. Inter-group games began in January, 1914, and in March the “Ursinus Independents” beat P.M.C. 41 to 33 in what was called the closing game of the season, though no other game is reported. The first regular season for basketball as a varsity sport was 1915, when the team, captained by D. Sterling Light ’16, now a member of the Board of Directors, won five out of ten, including all its home games. In 1919 the team played a twenty game schedule, winning half of the games.

Baseball was in better plight, but the years before and after the war were more distinguished for the spirit of the teams and the loyalty of the fans than for successful seasons. Tennis increased in popularity, and varsity teams played a few matches with other colleges from 1915 on. The 1919 team sparked by Misao Nishiyama ’19 and E. Warner Lentz ’21 won four out of five.

The real innovation of this period was the introduction of inter-collegiate athletics for women, for which Ursinus has long been nationally and even internationally famous. Ultimate credit belongs to the Ursinus Women’s Club, which, as was already related, provided a director of women’s athletics from 1916 on. The
actual mover and founder was Agnes R. McCann, who served as director and coach from 1918 to 1921. In the fall of 1918 she introduced hockey, and several interclass games were played. A year later the first intercollegiate game was played with Swarthmore, on November 1. Ursinus lost 8 to 1, but won on the following Saturday from Beechwood (now Beaver College) 3 to 1. Immediately a brief clash of opinion over whether hockey should be recognized as a major sport and its players awarded a varsity “U” arose. The women eventually won. In 1920 the team, captained by Marguerite Moyer ’21, lost disastrously to Temple, 11 to 1, but in a return game tied 2 to 2 and again beat Beechwood. Hockey was firmly established.

Basketball for women, which had been introduced by Marian Spangler ’03 and her sister Sarah ’06 in the first years of the century and then dropped, was also made an intercollegiate sport. Inter-hall games were played in the spring of 1920, and the first game with another college, Beechwood, on February 10, ended in victory for the opponent, 21 to 14. This game was played by girls’ rules in the first half, when Ursinus was blanked, and boys’ rules in the second. In a return match Beechwood won again, 26 to 21. Mary B. Closson ’20 was the first captain of women’s basketball. A year later the team played a seven game schedule, losing all. The beginning was hard but better days were ahead under the leadership of Madeline Roe, who joined the faculty in 1921.

Interest in these and other sports was stimulated by the formation in 1919, under Miss McCann’s influence, of the Women’s Athletic Association. All women were automatically members, and those who were not capable of playing varsity hockey or basketball were encouraged to engage in hiking, archery, or swimming. The Hiking Club, in existence for a few years in the early twenties, awarded a “U” to each girl who logged one hundred miles. Swimming was a sporadic pastime; fortunately the Perkiomen in those happy days was unpolluted. Archery never really caught on.

Although comparatively few students engaged in it, inter-collegiate debating had its heyday in the twenties. Debates, formal and informal, had always had a prominent place in the programs of Zwing and Schaff, but inter-collegiate debating really began in 1920 when, through the persistent efforts of a few students and the encouragement of Professor Martin W. Witmer, who had joined the faculty that fall, six men were selected from each of the societies to try out for a team to represent the College. Thus began Ursinus’ participation in what was the Inter-collegiate Debating League, formed in 1922–3. Debates and dual meets were held with such colleges as Pennsylvania, Juniata, Gettysburg, Lafayette, Muhlenburg, and Bucknell. After Dr. Elizabeth B. White came to Ursinus in 1924 this activity was opened to women and the Women’s Debating Club was formed in February of 1925, matching the Men’s Debating Club organized the preceding year.

As was stated earlier, fraternities did not exist officially. But as the 1921 Ruby stated,
organizations, but outsiders know little concerning these organizations.... They have been investigated and tolerated by the authorities. However the official seal is withheld.

After a few years they withered away, only to have permanent successors in the fraternities organized from 1924 on.

During the first years of President Omwake’s administration the Ursinus School of Music flourished under John Myron Jolls and various female assistants. In its palmiest days it sponsored the Men’s Glee Club, the Women’s Glee Club, the Men’s Quartette, the Women’s Quartette, and the Handel Choral Society. Instrumental instruction was almost exclusively in piano and organ, again taught by various women until Clara E. Waldron joined the faculty in 1917. After her departure in 1924, however, training in piano was soon dropped. Mr. Jolls, who first came to Ursinus in 1908, resigned in 1921 and was succeeded by Marian G. Spangler, who had been giving individual vocal instruction since 1918. She was succeeded in 1923 by Jeanette Douglas Hartenstein, who was in effect the Music Department for the next twelve years. In all this period interest in music was strong, and the Ruby and Weekly record an unending series of concerts, entertainments, performances, including each year the rendition of an oratorio.

Campus life was perhaps parochial in the years from 1912 to 1924, for the automobile had not yet become a part of the undergraduate’s way of life. President Omwake commented on the beginning of the weekend exodus, but for the most part students stayed on campus throughout the term. Excitement came through the rivalry of classes, particularly the freshmen and sophomores; high points being the annual attempt to kidnap the freshman president to keep him from attending the class banquet, and the tug-of-war, which was introduced in 1918 as a substitute for the class rush. That year the frosh won: “how the girls did cheer and how they rushed back to the dorms to put up the curls and braids which had been hanging the past week or so because of soph decree.”

Sometimes drama came through unforeseen events. Early in the morning of November 29, 1921, Shreiner Hall was discovered to be on fire. The “chronicler” in the 1923 Ruby recorded the historic moment:

Shreiner puts some “pep” into Ursinus and decides to get on fire. Who could forget it, those rosy, hair curled, visions of early morning loveliness, with Miss Hamm and Miss Waldron looking their best? Indeed, it was an enchanting sight—one not to be forgotten! Love-making was even indulged in, when “Shorty” Leeming defied “Alt” and took Irene in his arms. But due credit must be given to the College Fire Dept. Consisting of one express wagon, a garden hose, and a ladder, it did heroic work, while Mrs. Tower ably conducted a bucket brigade, in accordance with the Minute Men from the “dorms.” This fire was a decided success, for it gave the entire male force of the golf club a chance to pry undisturbed into the gossiping recesses of Shreiner. They surely didn’t miss a thing. The chief loss was a few fur coats and dresses burned in a staircase closet.

Fur coats recall the fact that the early twenties were the era of the flapper preserved in John Held cartoons—with her short skirt, bobbed hair, a striking
figure in her raccoon coat and flapping galoshes. Ursinus had its share, and there were those who saw in the flapper and her male counterpart, the “lounge lizard”, signs of moral decay in the younger generation: “I have read in the papers that in the course of a short time bobbed hair girls will become bold.”

In retrospect it seems a rather decorous era, and in fact contact between the sexes apart from the meeting in class and extra-curricular activities was confined rather strictly to “social hour” about which a writer in the 1924 Ruby comments wryly that

It is a sort of time between the day and twilight when moony couples get together and wish they were somewhere else far from the eyes of man. Now and then some of them act as if they were. During the time devoted to its observance participants are permitted to enjoy such well-known indoor sports as holding hands, chewing what is known as the rag, playing the piano, going for a drink of water and fighting for the davenport. On warm spring nights the main amusement is walking around kicking the heads off dandelion stalks. . . . Social hour is cheaper than canoeing, dancing, eating, studying and smoking but not as exciting.

A study of the alumni records for the era, however, suggests that somehow or other men and women got to know each other fairly well, for the number of successful Ursinus marriages grew year by year.