
“The Law of College Customs is [as] Inexorable as the Laws of Chemistry or Physics”: The Transition to a Modern Purdue University, 1900–1924

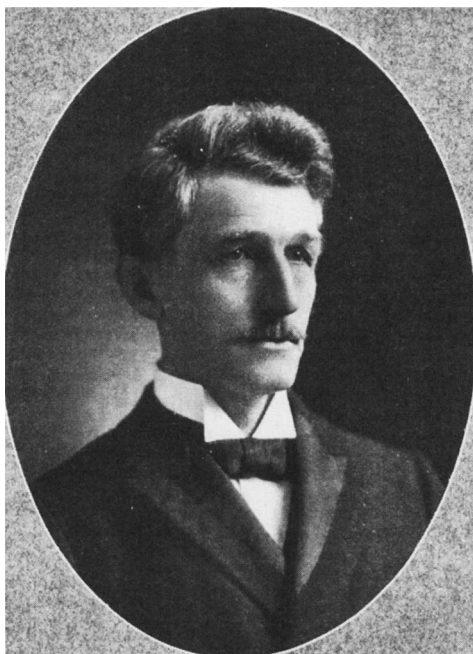
Ryan K. Anderson*

Leroy Glass’s October 30, 1915, journal entry shows that the freshman had lived a model Purdue University student life to that point. During the previous weeks he had enjoyed his first college football game, received his Reserve Officer Training Corps uniform, attended Sunday services at the “Westside church,” and spent extra time “in Dairy.” The first day of November brought a change. He skipped church (and never recorded attending services again), and went riding in a “ford” along the Wabash, continuing through both Happy Hollow Park and Lafayette before returning to his boarding house where he “studied Sunday night.” Glass’s second entry illustrates his acculturation to early twentieth-century student life—a metamorphosis that spoke to a grander change occurring at Purdue. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Purdue students helped transform the institution from a small Indiana technical college to a university on the cusp of growth and prestige.¹

The process hardly took place in a vacuum. The massive social, cultural, political, and economic reorganization that linked once-disparate communities in a network of shared standards—what Alan Trachtenberg has called the “incorporation of America”—fundamentally changed the way people saw the world around them. Robert Wiebe, using the example of the American Medical Association, outlined this process in *The Search for Order, 1877–1920*. In the early nineteenth century, the AMA grew in membership and authority. Its prestige enabled the organization to establish national standards of professional medical practice that greatly enhanced public trust in physicians. As it had in the professions, modernization in nearly every facet of American life redefined everything from clothing and entertainment

*Ryan Anderson is a doctoral candidate at Purdue University, West Lafayette. A version of this paper was read at the 2002 Indiana Association of Historians conference in Indianapolis. The author wishes to thank Nancy Gabin, Michelle Patterson, Mark Edwards, Jim Buss, and the editors and outside readers of the *Indiana Magazine of History* for their comments. The special collections staff at Purdue University proved especially helpful. Kristen Krintz helped to compile the student database employed here.

¹Leroy Glass, December 6, 1915, “Sunshine Book” [personal diary, October 30, 1915–June 17, 1917], Leroy C. Glass Folder, Purdue Alumni File G-G1 (hereafter referred to as Alumni File), University Special Collections (Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana).



WINTHROP STONE SERVED AS PURDUE UNIVERSITY'S PRESIDENT FROM 1900 TO 1921. DURING MUCH OF HIS TENURE HE AND STUDENTS VIED FOR CONTROL OF STUDENT CULTURE. THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN C. 1907.

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

to gender roles and parental responsibility. Success in both urban and rural America came to depend on the ability to navigate this new system of shared standards and expectations.²

As broad and impersonal as this process appears, its locomotion depended on local efforts with familiar faces. This essay focuses on the personal level by examining the changes Purdue students and administrators experienced between 1900 and 1924. During this

²William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32* (Chicago, 1958), 1-11; James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990), 146-47, 155-58, 158-62; Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis, 1968), 271-85, 361-71, 378-85; Martin J. Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law, and Politics* (New York, 1988), 1-3, 11, 35; Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1984), 273, 275, 277; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York, 1982), 1-8; Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967), xii-xiv, 114-15.

period President Winthrop Stone worked to define the school as a place that produced service-minded men and women who spread the gospel of progress throughout Indiana and the Midwest. As the students, by contrast, focused on the social side of their development—often against the wishes of campus administrators—they articulated a quite different college culture. Ultimately, in the creation of two campus facilities, the Memorial Gymnasium and the Memorial Student Union, official and student culture found common ground on which to realize their visions of a modern Purdue.

That students and administrators managed to protect separate interests had historical precedent in nineteenth-century higher education. Antebellum colleges limited courses of study within sectarian environments to affirm existing knowledge and create moral men. Students wishing to learn anything outside of the traditional philosophy-and-religion curriculum created campus societies toward those ends. Even as higher education changed after the Civil War, these separate student and administrative spheres remained. The movements to recreate colleges into universities and to establish new institutions (the latter resulting in Purdue) pushed learning toward technological and secular education. But for all the talk of reform, the people who created universities did little to bridge the gap between students and faculty. Universities featured specialized classes that encouraged professors to interact with a minority of interested students. Campus life away from the classroom continued to provide what the official culture could not. Despite the introduction of women into universities, extracurricular education remained male-dominated and fraught with illicit pleasures such as smoking, drinking, and lewd behavior. While rough and seemingly frivolous, student culture pursued serious goals. Its followers expected young men to “do” something, whether to join a literary society, edit the newspaper, or play on varsity or class athletic teams. These endeavors served as a shadow classroom that taught participants the social strategies needed in the real world, where *whom* one knew mattered as much as *what* one knew.³

Once Progressive Era university leaders decided to remake their institutions, the relationship between the “real classroom” and the “shadow classroom” became the focal point of conflict between faculty and students. Reformers such as Winthrop Stone worked to redefine the university as a place that developed students who worked for a common social good. Their efforts, colliding head on with the students’ own initiatives to update their culture, created the twentieth-century university.⁴

³Helen L. Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York, 1987), 41-55; Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens, Ga., 1990), 245-63, 267-86, 288-90, 332-34, 342-48.

⁴Rudolph, *American College and University*, 355-72.

As Purdue's leader, Stone undertook the responsibility of training engineers and scientific farmers who would return to their Hoosier communities and advance the transition to modern America. An institutional legacy of struggle made this a daunting task. Former president James Smart, who took office in 1883, had faced an inadequate budget and meager facilities as he worked to build an impressive technical college. When Stone succeeded Smart in 1900, his first concerns were to maintain the engineering school's instruction and personnel, to encourage the growth of the agricultural department, and to integrate women into the university. Yet scholars characterize his administration as a time of limited expansion and progress. The roots of both men's accomplishments, and of their difficulties, lay in the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862.⁵

The Morrill Act established a system of land-grant colleges to educate scientific agriculturalists, miners, engineers, progressive housewives, home economics teachers, and military officers. The federal government appropriated start-up funds, then entrusted the state governments with the operation of the colleges. States established institutions and appointed experts in agricultural and mechanical fields to run the schools and train their students. Land-grant universities held responsibilities outside of the classroom, including conducting research to improve technology, and working through extension programs to educate the general population in scientific agriculture. Graduates taught in local high schools and extension services.⁶

The act granted university presidents the freedom to determine the nature of their respective schools. Their individual efforts coalesced into what Stone and others called the "new university"; it integrated basic liberal arts with a scientific education and specific research to prepare leaders who, it was hoped, would reform corporate America and provide clean government. It taught students to look at their life's work as a part of a larger effort to strengthen society, culture, and politics via the construction of associations with other like-minded individuals—something Stone called the "Purdue Spirit." This, he argued, required the replacement of the family farmer and independent businessman by scientific professionals.⁷

⁵William Murray Hepburn and Louis Martin Sears, *Purdue University: Fifty Years of Progress* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1925), 98-101; H. B. Knoll, *The Story of Purdue Engineering* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1963), 41-66; Rudolph, *American College and University*, 329-54; Robert A. Topping, *A Century and Beyond: the History of Purdue University* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1988), 148-49.

⁶J. B. Edmond, *The Magnificent Charter: The Origin and Role of the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges and Universities* (Hicksville, N.Y., 1978), xv-xvi.

⁷Robert Alexander Falconer, "The Spiritual Idea of the University," in *Indiana University, 1820-1920: A Centennial Memorial* (Bloomington, Ind., 1921), 295-304; Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago, 1996), 61-87; Sklar, *Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism*, 1-2; Winthrop Stone, "Making of Men," speech delivered at the United Communal Travelers meeting, Lafayette, Ind., May 1913, Winthrop E. Stone Papers, 1896-1921, University Special Collections. For similar changes at other

In pursuing his objectives Stone depended on state funding for more buildings. Three things kept him from looking outside of the chain of command for support. First, since the Morrill Act obligated the university to serve the citizenry, responsibility to fund this effort fell to the state government. Second, he eschewed private contributions from big business for academic buildings because he feared that companies might use such gifts as leverage to influence men and women in the interest of private gain, not public service. As future public servants, Purdue graduates had to be taught to act with society's best interest in mind, not the corporation's. Third, even if he wanted to solicit the alumni for funds, he did not have much of a pool on which to draw. Aside from its small size, the young alumni population had not yet accumulated wealth.⁸

Stone's background also influenced the environment he tried to create at Purdue. Observers pointed to his New Hampshire upbringing and education in Massachusetts to explain his somewhat austere personality. Many people compared him to another northeasterner of his time, Calvin Coolidge. A renowned chemist, Stone first came to Purdue in 1889 as a professor. He had been trained at Massachusetts Agricultural College, itself a land-grant school, and received his graduate education at the University of Göttingen. Like many other American academics of his generation, he absorbed the ideals of the German university system, which emphasized objective standards of research and teaching.⁹

Stone maintained that Purdue's mission was to cultivate an atmosphere that transformed young people into society's intellectual and moral leaders. He assumed personal responsibility for as many decisions concerning the operation of the school as possible, from advising incoming students to making sure that the new piano in

universities see George Colcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore, Md., 1966), 228-80; James Gray, *The University of Minnesota, 1851-1951* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1951), 193-239; Edmund J. James, *Sixteen Years at the University of Illinois, a Statistical Study of the Administration* (Champaign and Urbana, Ill., 1920), 256-58; James Riley Montgomery, Stanley J. Folmsbee, and Lee Seifert Greene, *To Foster Knowledge: A History of the University of Tennessee, 1794-1970* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1984), 132-70; Stow Persons, *The University of Iowa in the Twentieth Century: An Institutional History* (Iowa City, Ia., 1990), 20-56; James Pollard, *History of the Ohio State University: The Story of its First Seventy-Five Years, 1873-1948* (Columbus, Ohio, 1952), 165-222; Kent Sagendorph, *Michigan: The Story of the University* (New York, 1948), 247-53; and Verne A. Stadtman, *The University of California, 1868-1968* (New York, 1970), 201-13.

⁸Hepburn and Sears, *Purdue University*, 101-106; Knoll, *Story of Purdue Engineering*, 47. For Stone's views on these issues see his many addresses to local and national bodies in the Stone Papers.

⁹Knoll, *Story of Purdue Engineering*, 42-44; Walter P. Metzger, *Academic Freedom in the Age of the University* (New York, 1961), 93-95, 106, 111, 138; Montgomery et al., *To Foster Knowledge*, 367-68; Rudolph, *American College and University*, 398-99; Lawrence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, 1965), 125-33.

Fowler Hall be used only for official functions. He established a clear set of regulations for his charges that directed them toward his idea of the modern university while allowing for both traditional and progressive ideas of citizenship and society.¹⁰

Stone inculcated his values in students from the moment they arrived on campus. He told the class of 1917 at the beginning of their freshman year that "Entering upon a college course is one of the great events in life. It destroys the home relations and home supervision which the student has previously known, calls for the exercise of self-reliance and the assumption of new responsibilities."¹¹ This new identity as a college student required undergraduates to take on university work, maintain their health, and develop sound morals. It necessitated breaking old ties with their hometowns and families and establishing relationships within the framework of university life before returning to their communities to spread the gospel of "the Purdue Spirit." To aid their development as civic leaders, Stone urged undergraduates to embrace the "new education" and the social gospel. The former married scientific education to the liberal arts, while the latter encouraged students to look beyond their personal desires and pursue social progress. He also advised them to submit to divine authority and to seek personal perfection. Students had to accept individual responsibility for their education. To accomplish this, they needed to acquire the moral traits of an ideal Victorian: self-restraint, belief in delayed gratification, and Protestant values. Toward this end, Stone believed that students must develop seven essential habits: an orderly routine, concentration, industriousness (innovation), punctuality, timeliness (finishing work on schedule), respectful relations with professors, and elimination of the "non-essentials" of the college world.¹²

Stone's views on student leisure reflected a similar outlook. Joining organizations that allowed a student to "march in step" with like-minded individuals and to "assume command of himself and of his affairs," Stone believed, softened the wear of academic routine

¹⁰H. M. Appleman, "Autobiography," in Earl G. Maxwell Folder, File M, Alumni File; Hepburn and Sears, *Purdue University*, 104; Knoll, *Story of Purdue Engineering*, 47-49; "Pres. W. E. Stone Greets Students," clipping marked "Fall 1914," *Purdue Exponent*, Class of 1911 Purdue Scrapbook (September 23, 1911-June 1, 1976), Class Files, Special Collections; Stone, "The College Man and the Industrial World," May 4, 1900, Stone Papers; Stone, "Means of Preventing Extravagance and Snobbery among College Students," November 1909, *ibid.*; Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 151-52.

¹¹Stone, "Lecture before Freshman Class," September 15, 1915, Stone Papers.

¹²Susan Curtis, "The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds. (Chicago, 1990), 71-72; Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact upon Religion in America* (Boston, 1958), 224. For a few examples of Stone's views see Stone, "A Degree Course in Home Economics," November 14, 1905, Stone Papers; Stone, "Education for the Farm," June 21, 1902, *ibid.*

on the student's soul. Implied boundaries restricted these pursuits; he encouraged students to pursue lofty ideas by participating in musical groups and literary societies, and by patronizing the recently constructed Eliza Fowler Hall for education in the fine arts. He hoped to erect a new gymnasium to help students become stronger through physical culture.¹³

The students' preference for athletics, fraternities, and the bars of Lafayette frustrated Stone beyond endurance. Time and again, he rebuked them at mandatory chapel meetings, convocations, or in his office. He acquired a reputation for railing against everything from cheating in the classroom to what he perceived as an unhealthy emphasis on football. He allowed that students could have fun but complained that they often went beyond respectable limits and created far-reaching problems for society. Football hoopla was singled out for special rebuke: "At present much of the evils of athletics, particularly football, comes from the popular interest in the game which tacitly encourages winning at any cost, and contributes to the spectacular enthusiasm at the contests. The student body and the team in the absence of any strong dominating college spirit and sentiment yield to the popular influence."¹⁴ Stone argued that the rash of deaths in football games nationwide and the ill effects of football weekends at Purdue—brawls, drunkenness, and property damage—had nothing to do with the game itself, but with the spirit in which football games took place. Time and again he explained to the students the danger into which they put not only themselves but the university when they strayed from his path to success.¹⁵ How, he asked, could any student anticipate gainful employment after graduation, or expect the state to appropriate more funds for improving the campus with this association? Nevertheless, the situation grew so dire that Lafayette citizens assumed any young man seen intoxicated in public came from Purdue.¹⁶

Stone's collected papers indicate that by 1915 he had stopped criticizing the student body for its behavior and instead concentrated on improving the Agriculture Department. Had he finally won students over to his way of thinking? Anyone familiar with the image of bawdy college life in the 1920s might be dubious. Instead, students and administrators at Purdue found the means—particularly through two memorializing efforts—to relate their divergent cultures without either side surrendering its historically distinct sense of identity. In

¹³Stone, "Lecture before Freshman Class"; Stone, "Chapel Address," May 23, 1902, Stone Papers; Stone, "Good Citizenship," n.d., *ibid.*; Stone, "Introduction to Dr. Myer Bloomfield Book," September 1916, *ibid.*; Stone, "A Look Ahead," September 16, 1907, *ibid.*; Stone, "Making of Men," *ibid.*; Stone, "A Religion to Live By," *ibid.*; Stone, "Religious Status of the College Student," *ibid.*

¹⁴Stone, "Reform in Football," December 18, 1905, *ibid.*

¹⁵Stone, "Relationship Between the Student and the University Authorities," September 18, 1899, *ibid.*

¹⁶Stone, "Some Phases of College Ethics," n.d., *ibid.*

order to understand this shift, it is important first to understand student life as it had developed up to that time.¹⁷

Turn-of-the-century Hoosier teenagers, more so than their parents, felt they could readily sever ties to the land and their families. Although Indiana remained a rural state, increasing numbers of young men and women flocked to factories in the state's largest cities: Indianapolis, Evansville, and Fort Wayne. Others left home to pursue an education at Indiana State Normal, Purdue University, or Indiana University. These schools underwent greater changes than the state's private schools because they were more responsive to the vocational aspirations of the state's college-age population.¹⁸ Like the other two state schools, Purdue suffered growing pains. Between the beginning of Stone's administration in 1900 and 1924 enrollment soared from 400 to more than 3,000. The overwhelming majority of these students came from Indiana. Furthermore, almost 90 percent came from small towns or rural areas.¹⁹

At the turn of the century, universities remained predominantly male environments, featuring drinking parties, poker games, and hazing. These pastimes provided a trial by fire that transformed boys into men while serving as a respite from the "real world," which ended with graduation—although alumni weekends let them revisit the scene of their revelry. College provided a place where youths let off steam and readied themselves for adult responsibilities. And while the precise relationship between student culture and official university culture changed continually, what Laurence Veysey calls "the gulf between students and faculty" remained a constant.²⁰

The Old Dormitory served as the physical setting for student interaction at Purdue. The Association of Dorm Devils (AODD) subjected underclass dormitory residents to hazing within its walls. Typical stunts involved stripping neophytes and shaving their entire bodies, raiding packages sent from home, and organizing "night shirt

¹⁷John G. Coulter, *The Dean, an Account of his Career and of his Convictions* (Lafayette, Ind., 1940), 109, 123-24; Hepburn and Sears, *Purdue University*, 101; Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 118-19, 123; Fred C. Kelly, *David Ross, Modern Pioneer: A Biography* (New York, 1946), 71; Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 150; Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, 294-302.

¹⁸Hepburn and Sears, *Purdue University*, 101, 102-103; Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 5-8; Knoll, *Story of Purdue Engineering*, 59-60; Burton Dorr Meyers, D. D. Banta, and David Demaree, *History of Indiana University: 1902-1937* (Bloomington, Ind., 1952), 134; Reuben, *Making of the Modern University*, 5-7; Rudolph, *American University and College*, 329-72.

¹⁹"Enrollment Figures Furnish Proof of Purdue's Growth," *Purdue Alumnus*, XI (May 1924), 28; "Enrollment at Purdue by Classes from 1874-75 to 1925-26," Class of 1911 Purdue Scrapbook, Class Files. The figures regarding the types of students attending Purdue are based on the author's survey of the *Purdue Debris* from 1900 to 1924: of 6,927 total students, 75.37 percent were in-state students, and 13.4 percent of in-state students were from Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Evansville.

²⁰Horowitz, *Campus Life*, x, xiii, 121, 123; Veysey, *Emergence of the American University*, 294.



THE MOCK TORTURE OF A STUDENT BY THE "DORM DEVILS." STONE DISAPPROVED OF THE SORT OF STUDENT HIJINKS EXHIBITED IN THIS 1902 PHOTOGRAPH.

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

parades." The AODD lost its lair in 1903 when Stone converted the building into classrooms. From then until the 1920s, men attending Purdue lived off campus in fraternity houses, boarding houses, or at home. The Dorm Devils got the last laugh on Stone by printing a photograph in the university's yearbook, the *Debris*, of a nude youth kneeling in front of AODD members holding him down with pitchforks as an inked-in Satan looked on. The devils, as a group, managed to last until the 1960s.²¹

Like the men, Purdue women did not always live up to the administration's standards. Ladies' Hall, the women's dormitory, saw many of the same kind of pranks that the Old Dorm did. Girls blew on gas outlets in their rooms to extinguish the flames in other rooms where friends studied, and they dunked at least one freshman into a tub to impress upon her the humble role she ought to assume. They skipped classes just as their male counterparts did, and when in the classroom they did not always focus on books. *Debris* editors claimed, for example, that if coed Carrie Richardson were to have written a book, "The Influence of Sidelong Glances in Winning the Sterner Sex" would have made an apt title.²²

²¹Purdue University, *Debris* (1899), no page numbers; *ibid.* (1901), 249.

²²*Ibid.* (1901), 296; *ibid.* (1906), 355-56; Purdue University *Exponent*, October 11, 1906; Shirley Marchalonis, *College Girls: A Century in Fiction* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1995), 54-56.

When May Caulkins earned her bachelor of science degree in 1900, after a student career marked by the presidency of clubs ranging from the YWCA to the Philalethean literary society and a role as the class historian, a woman's place on campus had not yet been restricted by Stone's plans for female education. In 1905, he established a home economics school and in 1908 an education department. Female students took general science courses and had already shunned one attempt to establish a "cooking school" before these modifications. Stone's desire to train progressive housewives for Indiana's male farmers and competent public school teachers for its burgeoning public school system fueled this change. Women infiltrated science and engineering courses on occasion but for the most part found themselves segregated from men in the classroom. The process helped Purdue men continue to guard their right jealously to define the student culture as a whole.²³

College life taught young men to live away from parental control, to defeat competitors, and to claim independence from authority. The close-knit groups youths joined taught them violent, ungentlemanly behavior, as well as to oppose authority. Such a sentiment was reflected in a poem composed by Simeon "Sim" Miller for his fraternity brothers in 1906:

Get the clear out of here
 You damned old fool
 Kiss my ass you bastard dean²⁴

Student rowdiness had a long history across the country; its destructive veneer masked a need for purpose and structure. An editor of the student newspaper, the *Exponent*, pointed to "certain unwritten laws which have become binding through long continued usage by all classes or preceding classes, [and] should be observed by all."²⁵ The student body, a majority of whom came from Indiana or nearby midwestern states, looked to memories of pioneer forefathers to explain their actions. When they bragged about the originality of customs at "Old Purdue" or referred to nonexistent or exaggerated differences between their practices and those of other schools, they drew from a perception of what it meant to be a Hoosier pioneer. By claiming a unique heritage, they defied Stone and explained away their bad behavior.²⁶

²³Ruth Bordin, *Women at Michigan: The "Dangerous Experiment" 1870s to the Present* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1999), 25, 31, 35-39; Purdue University, *Debris* (1900), 70-71; Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 197, 201-202; Marchalonis, *College Girls*, 28; Rudolph, *American College and University*, 195, 323-25; Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, Conn., 1985), 85-87; Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 169-73.

²⁴Simeon Miller, "Every Little Bit Helps," Simon [Simeon] Miller Scrapbook, 1906, File M, Alumni File.

²⁵Purdue University *Exponent*, October 3, 1901.

²⁶Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, 1995), 7-8; John E. Bodnar,

This delinquent behavior served as more than an outlet for students; it ordered their school year and introduced new initiates to the rhythms of university life. "According to tradition," the class of 1911 noted in its scrapbook, "the 'varsity steam' was reduced last night to normal pressure. Now for the work of getting an education . . . [any more] differences . . . should [be settled] on the football field."²⁷ The editors of the 1910 *Debris* expressed a belief in the organic nature of this process when they announced that "the law of college customs is [as] inexorable as the laws of chemistry or physics."²⁸ The seeming chaos of undergraduate life at Purdue functioned within a structure of order—some of it, at least, self-imposed. Students "made" Purdue's existence, argued senior John Larkin, and deserved the right to construct a student government:

Some say that our freshmen would not respect the laws of student government, that they would not submit to being governed by another student. This is false. Even while at Purdue, the student is governed by the higher laws of our country, by the laws of our state, and so minutely sifted to the laws of our town . . . There is no such thing as independence. Every being, directly or indirectly is dependent on some other one.²⁹

Larkin's call for social responsibility echoed Stone's and suggests that students felt the influences of America's incorporation without the president's prompting. By 1900, for instance, the Purdue Athletic Association (PAA) had existed for over a decade. This student organizing of campus life grew over the next two decades to the point that Stone assumed that student culture had converged with the responsible administrative culture he fostered.³⁰

Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 113-14, 135; Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, Conn., 1989), 13-14; Purdue University *Exponent*, October 3, 1901, October 3, 1902, September 16, 1903; "The 'Night Shirt' Parade," clipping, John F. G. Miller Scrapbook, Alumni File; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993), 3-6, 56-58; Rudolph, *American College and University*, 96-99, 157. For student culture and misbehavior during this period at other schools see Colcott, *History of the University of Maryland*, 228-80; W. Bruce Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars: College and Community in the "Age of the University," 1865-1917* (University Park, Pa., 1992), 189-212; George B. Manhart, *DePauw Through the Years* (2 vols., Greencastle, Ind., 1962), I, 266; Montgomery *et al.*, *To Foster Knowledge*, 374-76; Sagendorph, *Michigan*, 180-84, 230-35; Stadtman, *University of California*, 163-73, 182-86.

²⁷"Freshmen Win Tank Scrap," clipping from *Lafayette Morning Journal*, September 23, 1911, Class of 1911 Purdue Scrapbook, Class Files.

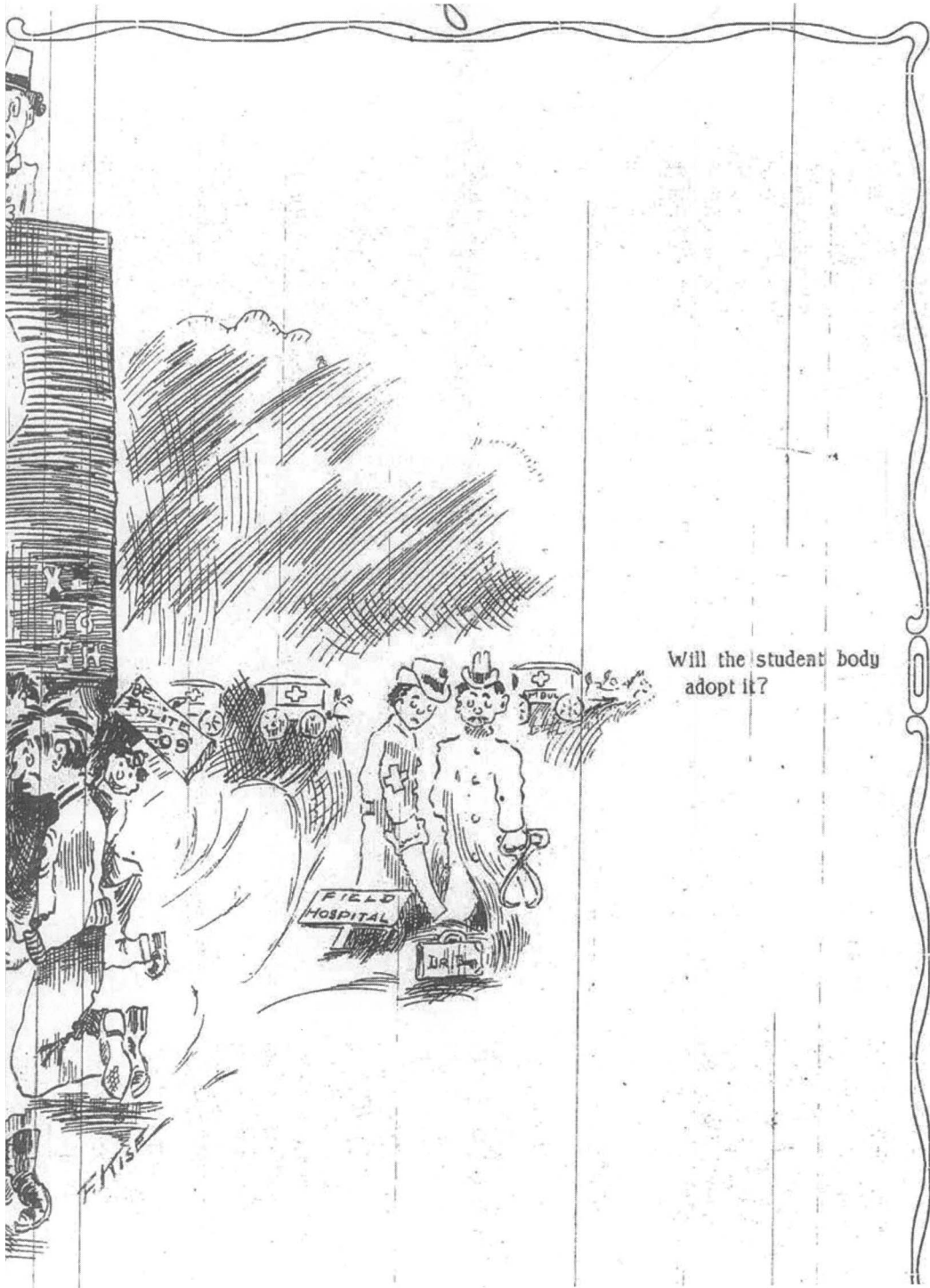
²⁸Purdue University, *Debris* (1910), 53; *ibid.* (1896), 58; *ibid.* (1897), 46; *ibid.* (1899), no page numbers; *ibid.* (1901), 122; *ibid.* (1902), 97, 269; *ibid.* (1903), 239; "Freshmen Win Tank Scrap," Class of 1911 Purdue Scrapbook, Class Files; "History of Green Caps at Purdue," Purdue University *Exponent* clipping, n. d., *ibid.*; "Historic Ground," photo of Tank Scrap Hill, 1909, Loretta Wallace Scrapbook, File W, Alumni File; "Juniors Defeat Freshmen Eleven," clipping, 1908, C. W. Driver Folder, File Dr-F, Alumni File; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 67-74.

²⁹John L. Larkin, "Purdue is Ready for Student Government," n. d., Larkin, John L., Folder, 1903, Alumni File.

³⁰"Athletics at Purdue," in Purdue Athletic Association *Bulletin* (1902), John F. G. Miller Scrapbook, 1903, Alumni File; Larkin, "Purdue is Ready," Larkin Folder,



THIS 1904 CARTOON IN THE *DEBRIS* LAMPOONS STONE'S EFFORT TO MAKE THE "TANK SCRAP," AN ANNUAL CONTEST FOR PAINTING RIGHTS TO THE WATER TANK, MORE RESPECTABLE AND LESS DANGEROUS. NOTE THE SIGNS READING "BE GENTLE 1910" AND "BE POLITE '09."



Will the student body
adopt it?

Purdue students were taught early to value competition for its own sake. As they stepped off the train in Lafayette, they could see a large black water tower which had a class's numerals painted on it in large white letters. The tradition of painting a class's year on the tank began in the spring of 1895. In the preceding years classes had painted these dates on different class buildings or flew female-stitched banners from the Mechanical Tower, only to see them removed the next day by Stone's orders. That year's sophomores distinguished themselves by painting their numerals on the tank, which was located off campus, though it proved a temporary statement of class superiority. Soon after "97" appeared on the tank, the freshmen turned it into a "98." The entering undergrads took up the challenge the next fall, and their efforts to protect their turf led to a fight between about twenty members of each class that lasted until nearly dawn.³¹

The annual "Tank Scrap," like the "color rush" at the University of Illinois, grew in seriousness and organization over the next few years as the swelling campus population brought more participants and spectators. Juniors goaded freshmen into painting the tank under the cover of darkness during the first month of school. Sophomores always managed to hear of it and appear at "tank scrap hill" in time to rush down the slope and into the charging freshman ranks, with seniors watching over them as marshals. The class whose numbers appeared on the tank at daybreak of the first football game of the year earned the privilege of keeping them up until the next fall. By 1902, the winners roped up the losing team and marched them downtown to perform a series of humiliating stunts that provided amusement for spectators; approximately 500 youths participated in 1903. The students, whose exploits attracted negative attention from Stone and the press, took it upon themselves to push for reforms in order to preserve the event. The *Exponent* commented that if "some one could suggest a plan whereby this [danger] might be eliminated, it would render the affair comparatively unobjectionable."³² The violence of the Tank Scrap forced student leaders to explain and justify it as a way to release coltish energy in freshmen and sophomores before settling into the rigors of schoolwork. An *Exponent* writer expressed the ritual's usefulness as a path to self-discovery by asserting that "the veil has for a moment been lifted aside, and the [participant] has seen himself in a truer light . . . a few have been humiliated by

ibid.; "Juniors Defeat Freshmen Eleven," Driver Folder, *ibid.*; "Northwestern v. Purdue Official Souvenir and Score Card," Simon [Simeon] Miller Scrapbook, *ibid.*; "Purdue Athletic Association Pamphlet," *ibid.* The incorporation of student culture occurred at other campuses also. See Stadtman, *University of California*, 182-85.

³¹Purdue University, *Debris* (1898), 72, 80, 217; *ibid.* (1899), no page numbers; *ibid.* (1900), 92, 279; *ibid.* (1901), 122; *ibid.* (1902), 97; Purdue University *Exponent*, November 1, 1897, October 3, 1901.

³²Purdue University *Exponent*, October 3, 1902.

the discovery."³³ None of this bothered the class of 1904, whose members repainted their numerals on the tank upon returning to campus for Gala Week in 1907.³⁴

Despite such efforts, Stone outlawed the scrap in 1908, forcing the students to take further steps to reform the event. Once reinstated—on the promise of orderliness—the fight underwent a number of changes until it ended in 1913. Its spontaneity dissipated as an effort was made to control the violence. The senior class organized a committee to oversee the scrap by meeting with the underclassmen ahead of schedule and educating them on the rituals and how to fight. Instead of a series of skirmishes leading up to the main event, upperclassmen designated a night for the event, gave the underclassmen instructions on how to scrap, and led them to the field. Where, before, the juniors and seniors played semiofficial roles, they now assumed assigned duties that gave them the responsibility of insuring that the event came off cleanly. They also led inspections of participants for weapons or hard-soled shoes, and assigned doctors to each camp to aid the injured. Students who believed that reforms had rendered the scrap "a clean, manly fight, but still a fight which requires brain, brawn, and nerve to win," applauded. Despite these precautions, sophomore Francis Oberchain collapsed while running down the tank scrap hill to meet the oncoming freshmen and died in the fall of 1913. The cause of death was shrouded in mystery. The coroner's report listed a heart attack as the official cause, but in popular memory he died of a broken neck.³⁵ The students met the next day and voted to discontinue scraps. The tank stood with the class of 1917's numerals as a reminder of the sad event until 1922, when students helped the waterworks company paint the tank white.³⁶

Student culture did not always rely on violence to express its values. At many universities and colleges, students marked the end of their academic careers and entrance into adulthood with book burnings, mock funerals, and trials. Students at the University of California at Berkeley, for instance, held a "Bourdon and Minto funeral" in which

³³*Ibid.*, September 30, 1903.

³⁴Purdue University, *Debris* (1908), 52.

³⁵The *Exponent* reported that Oberchain died of coronary failure; Purdue University *Exponent*, September 23, 1911. Several other sources claimed he died of a broken neck. Pearl Coggsell recalled in 1979 that she had heard after she left Purdue that the sophomore had broken his neck. Robert Topping reported the same in his history of the university in 1988, as did the Reamer Club in its history of Purdue traditions, published in 1989. Perhaps this popular memory stems from the need to show how bad the accident was to push the student body to give up the tradition voluntarily. Pearl Coggsell, "Story of Pearl Coggsell's Stay at Purdue U," manuscript, 1979, Pearl Child Folder, File G, Alumni File; Purdue Reamer Club, *Purdue Traditions: Past, Present, and Future* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1989), 97; Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 166.

³⁶Purdue University *Exponent*, February 1, 1908, September 23, 27, 1910, September 19, 23, 1911, September 20, 1912, September 10, 19, 20, 21, 1913.

they laid to rest the charred remains of textbooks belonging to two students.³⁷ The “Mechanic’s Burning” at Purdue, an annual mock funeral in the spring, commemorated the senior civil engineering students’ completion of study, provided an opportunity for one last schoolboy prank, and gave students the opportunity to criticize their professors and the university.³⁸

While book burnings appeared on campus as early as 1891, the ritual of the Mechanic’s Burning did not take solid shape until 1903. The first recorded “last sad rites” involved the seniors’ burning a mechanical engineering textbook in front of Fowler Hall and making speeches about the need to cheat in order to pass the course. They collected the ashes left over from the fire and, as a salute was fired, presented them to the junior class president. In the following years the event assumed the characteristics of a church service, which grew rowdy enough to prompt Stone to forbid the seniors from holding it in Fowler Hall. They moved the service to the armory and the burning to Stuart Field. Problems arose when freshmen locked out for lack of space tried to force their way into the ceremony.³⁹

By 1907, the ceremony was changed by placing an effigy of “I.P. Church” or some other fictional corpse into a casket. The class conducted a mock funeral, reading a eulogy and asking the crowd to participate in a congregational response, much like a real church service. The *Exponent* asked the ritual’s detractors to look beyond its “sacrilegious” elements and recognize it as “an ebullition of the superfluous spirit of youth—perhaps the last in the student’s lifetime.”⁴⁰ Prior to the “service,” the “body” lay in wake at a local off-campus hangout called Pa Townsley’s. After a week’s viewing, the senior class bore the casket to the armory with a procession featuring floats and outrageous costumes. At one point in the ceremony a horned devil pushed back the lid of the casket and leapt out to chastise those among the underclassmen who acted like “roughs,” “scabs,” or “goats.” Two seniors forced the devil back into the casket and bore it away to Stuart Field, where they burned it and fired volleys with the ROTC’s cannon in honor of “Church.” The most important part of the day may have been the seniors’ chance to accuse the professors of trying to flunk as many of them as possible.⁴¹

Changes in the Mechanic’s Burning predated the Tank Scrap’s demise. Efforts of each class to outdo its immediate predecessor made

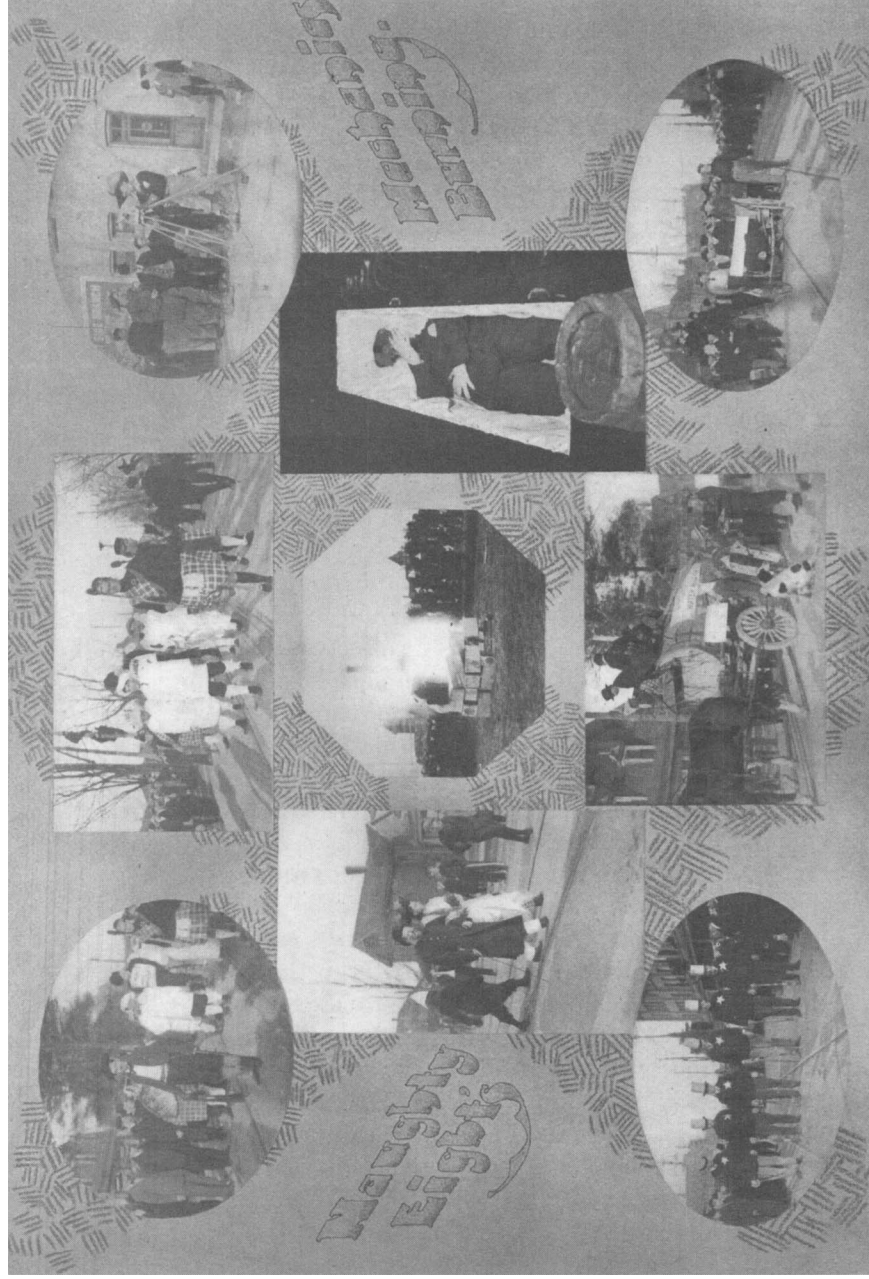
³⁷Stadtman, *University of California*, 164.

³⁸Purdue University *Exponent*, February 1891, February 4, 1903; Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 34.

³⁹Purdue University *Exponent*, February 4, 1903, February 4, 1904, February 10, 1905, February 16, 1906.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, February 23, 1907.

⁴¹Purdue University, *Debris* (1908), 58-60, 70; *ibid.* (1909), 57-58, 91; *ibid.* (1910), 65-67; Purdue University *Exponent*, February 23, 26, 27, 1907, March 14, 1908, January 31, March 21, 1909, April 14, 15, 16, 17, 1910; “The Late Lamented, I. P. C. Mechanics,” Loretta Wallace Scrapbook, 1909, Class Files.



MEMBERS OF THE PURDUE CLASS OF 1908 REFERRED TO THEMSELVES AS THE "NAUGHTY EIGHTS" IN THIS COLLAGE OF IMAGES FROM THAT YEAR'S MECHANIC'S BURNING. NOTE THE PARADE (TOP LEFT AND CENTER), THE "CORPSE," (CENTER RIGHT), AND THE BURNING ITSELF (CENTER).

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

each enactment more extravagant. This, along with the growing interest in the ceremony from outside the class, necessitated a stronger hierarchy to plan and execute the day's festivities. In the effort to innovate, maintain interest, and pacify the faculty who found its content offensive, the Mechanic's Burning committee decided to substitute a mock trial for the funeral, charging "I.P.C. Mechanics" and "M.M. Hydraulics" with "crimes against humanity." The result was "a real holiday affair in which good natured take offs on persons and things about the university are the main feature."⁴² The new ceremony jettisoned the sacrilegious elements of the event and kept its meaning for the students, letting them seek retribution for the "crimes" the faculty had committed. The *Exponent* ran stories for weeks preceding the trial, publicizing a fictitious posse in pursuit of Hydraulics and Mechanics—a trope that represented the seniors' last weeks of course work. When the seniors finished their studies, the paper announced that the two "bandits" had been captured at last and that a trial would follow shortly. The effigies were put on display in a jail guarded by class members. Bailiffs paraded them to the Stuart Field court and, amidst fanfare and revelry, on the appointed day a jury sentenced them to death or permanent incarceration. This new act lasted only until 1913, when a band of seniors kidnapped the malefactors in the middle of the hearing and lynched them.⁴³

The changing role of women at Purdue affected the Mechanic's Burning and the nature of campus life in general. The senior class in 1914 built on a tradition that had come to accompany the parade—a holdover from its representation as a funeral—and organized a circus and May Day celebration. May Day was observed by electing a queen and presenting an interpretive dance by some of the university's female students. In the years after the turn of the century, student culture came to accept women in a limited role on campus—as long as the role was subordinate. "Knew nothing about the sport [football] so was careful to yell only when my escort did," reported Pearl Coggsell when she recalled attending her first football game with a date. Her demeanor at this event shows what male students looked for in a coed. Coggsell also witnessed the 1912 Tank Scrap, recalling that "it was very impressive as the juniors and seniors lighted the big field where it was held by holding big torches. Seemed like [what] I imagined Roman battles looked."⁴⁴ The acceptance of women on campus grew clearer when the editors of the *Debris* answered their own query, "does co-education pay[?]," by printing photos of young lovers in romantic scenes around West Lafayette.⁴⁵

⁴²Purdue University *Exponent*, April 8, 1911.

⁴³Purdue University, *Debris* (1913), 70-72; Purdue University *Exponent*, April 4, 1911.

⁴⁴Coggsell, "Story of Pearl Coggsell's Stay"; "Picture of May Day Parade 1913," Child Folder, Alumni File; Purdue University, *Debris* (1920), 398.

⁴⁵"Picture of May Day Parade 1913."

The transition to a mixed-gender campus did not proceed smoothly, as the men of the university showed ambivalence toward the "co-ed's" place on campus as late as 1919. They argued that as long as there were only "some" women, things might improve. "Morale would be better . . . there would be no manless dance," the *Debris* stated, adding, "some sisters could show less aristocracy and more 'pep' . . . the Seniors could even have tight corduroy skirts to keep up the pace of fashion."⁴⁶ In short, if women assimilated into student life "correctly," they might benefit men by becoming sex objects. Not all Purdue women accepted this role or played by the rules that student or official culture set for them. On one occasion, they managed to set the Ladies' Hall roof on fire during an after-hours party. Stone found that he had a hard time justifying his claims about the efficacy of his educational plan when a female freshman sued a group of upperclassmen in 1915 for stripping her naked, pouring mucilage down her back, and painting "her breasts, neck, head, and back" with red ink.⁴⁷

The "fair co-ed" was successfully assimilated, and Purdue became a heterosocial world.⁴⁸ When women no longer threatened the nature of student culture, they were accepted as sex objects. "We will stack up our co-eds as the best looking in school," bragged the class of 1922.⁴⁹ Even so, women managed to assume important roles in student government and leadership, as long as they worked within boundaries that male culture allowed. When they pushed the limits, males quickly voiced concern. The editors of the 1919 *Debris*, for instance, asked "where do the co-eds get all these 'P' sweaters?"⁵⁰ The assignment of the Purdue "P" for athletic achievement or student service had been the privilege of the male-run PAA and student government for over a decade. Despite their misgivings, men seemed unable to stem the women's progress in claiming power on campus. The upperclassmen pointed out in 1919 that never before had women risen to such prominent roles in student government. They served as class officers, took control of the most important social events, and joined the "rooter" section rather than the ladies' section at football games. The 1922 *Debris* gave women credit for transforming the "destructive" Mechanic's Burning into a modern event that showcased coeds.⁵¹

Male students continued to dominate student culture even as the number of women on campus increased, in part by exerting social pressure to confine women to traditional roles. Expanding the sorority system to accommodate the growing number of women on campus

⁴⁶Purdue University, *Debris* (1919), 376-77.

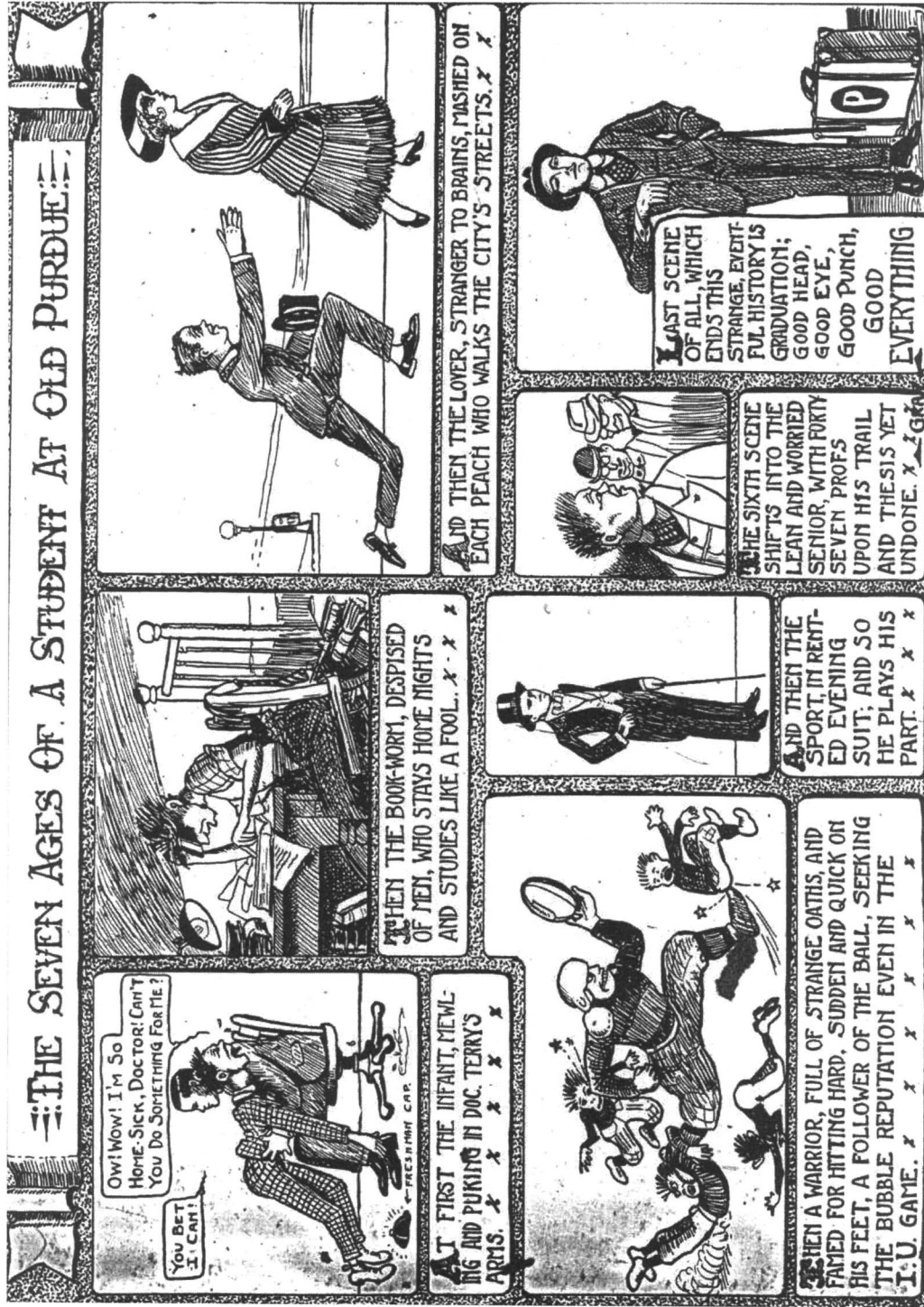
⁴⁷*Ibid.* (1915), 377, 381.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* (1922), 175.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* (1919), 376.

⁵⁰*Ibid.* (1921), 142.

⁵¹*Ibid.* (1919), 84, 154.



THIS STUDENT CARTOON IN THE 1916 *DEBRIS* FOLLOWED THE PROGRESSION OF THE IDEAL PURDUE MAN FROM FRESHMAN TO MAN OF THE WORLD.

also supported separate gender roles for women. Fraternities, for their part, likewise grew in number during the second half of Stone's tenure. The allure of an all-male circle to provide camaraderie remained important for Purdue's men, especially as women joined the student culture. Women occasionally took exception to the masculine character of that culture. One offended alumna complained about the *Purdue Alumnus's* use of the term "fellows" when addressing the student body. The editors defended themselves by stating that there existed no acceptable unisex pronouns to employ when speaking to the Purdue body and that she should not feel excluded from calls to support the alumni association's new magazine.⁵²

Student life at Purdue came increasingly to emphasize material success, in contrast to Stone's vision of graduates who would act in society's best interest. The new Purdue man resembled Sinclair Lewis's fictional character Ted Babbitt, eschewing academic pursuits and communal values for sociability, fast cars, and conspicuous consumption. Looking back over his first semester with fondness, Leroy Glass noted in his diary on December 6, 1915, "When I return home people ask me what I learn and how much I learn . . . to my mind this is but a small part of what is to be gained in college life."⁵³

Clubs offered students several options in deciding how to "be a man." Should a student assume the role of an athlete, intellectual, independent, or fraternity man? The decision also determined how an individual fit into the student body. By 1921, class histories included in the *Debris* argued about which class best understood the idea of corporate membership. By 1924, each claimed that they had come to support and represent a "greater Purdue." Social groups reflected this change by joining together as a corporate entity with a single representative to the student government.⁵⁴

Even though student culture grew more responsible, its conflicts with officialdom continued. Students still criticized Stone, hazed freshmen, and generally misbehaved. Stone's decision to fire popular head football coach Andy Smith in 1915, after taking control of the athletic program away from the Purdue Athletic Association, reminded the university community that the officials and students had different agendas. Purdue alumnus George Munro observed,

The students see the president as an arbitrary and absolute executive who decides questions of interest and importance to them without regard to the opinion of any man but himself . . . The president sees the boys as a lot of irresponsible boys, the ready tools

⁵²*Purdue Alumnus*, II (February 1915), 15; Purdue University, *Debris* (1908), 251; *ibid.* (1910), 339; *ibid.* (1916), 347; Purdue University *Exponent*, November 3, 1904, October 9, 1914, October 31, 1920.

⁵³Glass diary, November 8, 1915.

⁵⁴Purdue University, *Debris* (1921), 15, 67, 142, 146, 150; *ibid.* (1924), 46, 106, 110, 114; David O. Levine, *The American College: The Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986), 113-23; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 285; Thomas Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (Columbia, Mo., 2000), 2, 13, 14, 261, 267.



ON OCTOBER 31, 1903, THE BIG FOUR SPECIAL, CARRYING PURDUE FOOTBALL PLAYERS AND FANS TO THE TEAM'S ANNUAL MATCH WITH INDIANA UNIVERSITY, WAS APPROACHING INDIANAPOLIS WHEN IT RAMMED INTO THE REAR OF ANOTHER TRAIN. FOURTEEN PURDUE PLAYERS, TWO EMPLOYEES OF THE UNIVERSITY, AND A GUEST DIED.

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

of personal enemies who are seeking his downfall. They do not appreciate his efforts made in their behalf and have poor judgment as to espouse such a case as that of Smith.⁵⁵

Students and alumni alike worried that Stone's preoccupation with keeping football in check might make them the laughingstock of the Big Ten Conference.⁵⁶

Although student organizations were recognized by Stone as respectable, they did not yet march in step with the school's official culture. Glass may have hoped to mature and learn social graces to help him succeed in life, but he still reveled in boisterous student life in 1915, noting gleefully after the Boilermakers' first conference football victory that

[The] boys got the old chapel bell and ran down town with it . . . we had a night Shirt parade. I borrowed Keller's night shirt [and] we went down in West Lafayette and marched all over Lafayette ringing the bell and yelling . . . in columns of four . . . when we got over the Main St. bridge we joined hands and gave the Serpentine dance . . . The boys stopped autos [and] pushed some of the backwards [non-Purdue youths] out of crowd . . . Did not get up Sunday morning until 10 o'clock, went for a walk.⁵⁷

Its supporters defended the public rowdiness that remained a constant in college life across the country as a necessary part of transforming boys into men. As the 1920s approached, however, the way boys became men seemed to depend more on social relationships, consumerism, and the development of personality.⁵⁸

While the transformation to modern manliness from a traditional manhood and, by association, the move from a traditional school to a modern school reflected larger forces in American culture, it was intensified at Purdue by student responses to a local tragedy, the train wreck of 1903.

The wreck occurred on the morning of October 31 when the Big Four special, carrying players and fans from West Lafayette to Bloomington for the annual Purdue-Indiana football game, rounded a long curve outside of Indianapolis and rammed into a freight train backing off a spur line. In a moment the train lurched, and the first car splintered between the engine and the cars behind it. Fourteen Purdue football players, two staff members, and an alumnus guest were killed, and efforts to memorialize the seventeen victims of the "worst tragedy in Purdue's history" led to the construction of the Memorial Gymnasium and the early growth of the Purdue Memorial Union.⁵⁹

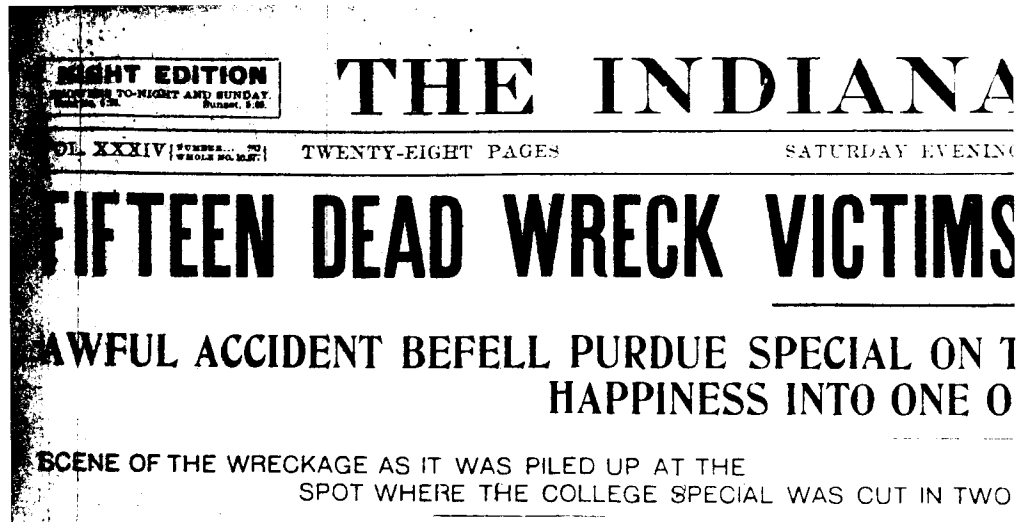
⁵⁵*Purdue Alumnus*, III (January 1916), 8.

⁵⁶Hepburn and Sears, *Purdue University*, 165.

⁵⁷Glass diary, November 8, 1915.

⁵⁸Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars*, 199-203; "Night Shirt' Parade," clipping, John F. G. Miller Scrapbook, Alumni File; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 285; Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man*, 2, 13, 14, 261, 267; Susman, *Culture as History*, 273, 275, 277.

⁵⁹Bob Collins, *Boilermakers: A History of Purdue Football* (Lafayette, Ind., 1976), 28-29; John Estes, Bob Pence, and Jim Vrugink, eds., *Purdue Athletics: "A Century of Excellence"* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1987), 70-71; *Indianapolis Journal*,



NEWS OF THE TRAGEDY FILLED THE PAGES OF THE STATE'S NEWSPAPERS FOR MANY DAYS.

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

The train wreck had two serious repercussions. First, the students and Stone reconciled their differences momentarily to find a satisfactory way to remember the dead. Their respective cultures shaped the cooperative efforts to raise funds for what became the Memorial Gymnasium. Despite this middle ground, the students found that the gymnasium largely ignored their values. The second effect was that when the memorial failed the students, they capitalized on their developing sense of modernity to provide for their cultural needs by forming the Purdue student union.

Student reaction to the tragedy varied from base to idealistic. Some were inspired to improve their lives. "All must be truer and better in consequence of the memory of those whose lives were sacrificed," the *Exponent* reminded readers in its memorial issue. The same publication later emphasized the manly qualities of the surviving players:

The young man who would make a successful player must be of more than average mental and physical strength . . . [so that he can have] control over himself . . . After the direful railroad wreck had occurred and when the injured were taken to hospitals . . . they exhibited rare fortitude and patience . . . cheerfulness, as one expects from the well, was given to everyone . . .⁶⁰

November 1, 1903; Indianapolis *Morning Star*, November 1, 1903; Lafayette *Journal and Courier*, November 1, 1903; New York *Times*, November 1, 1903; Purdue Reamer Club, *Purdue Traditions*, 63-64; Chicago *Tribune*, November 1, 1903.

The Big Four was the nickname for the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad, the New York Central's largest subsidiary in Indiana. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 236-37.

⁶⁰Purdue University *Exponent*, November 11, 1903, January 28, 1904.

POLIS NEWS

TOBER 31, 1903

TWENTY-EIGHT PAGES

FIVE DOLLARS A YEAR TWO CENTS

1834 COLUMNS OF ADS
THIS WAS THE FIRST OF THE
YEAR'S. MORE AND MORE
DOES THAT MEAN ANYTHING?

-MORE THAN FIFTY INJURED

E BIG FOUR AND CHANGED A DAY OF EXPECTED
THE DEEPEST GLOOM.

W OF WRECK LOOKING WEST, SHOWING COACHES OF
PURDUE SPECIAL PILED ON TOP OF LOADED STEEL COAL CARS

Sim Miller, an end on the team and Purdue's self-appointed poet laureate, boasted of his toughness when he recounted that upon waking moments after the wreck, he pushed aside a foot in his face only to find it was his own. The newspaper that printed this story noted that all of his friends had a good laugh over the incident. While the youths recovered, they played cards, met with friends, strummed guitars and banjos, and sang, giving the hospital ward a dorm-room atmosphere. Teammate G. B. Skrapp wrote to Miller, urging him to keep his chin up because they were "all in this together."⁶¹ The survivors saw themselves as maimed heroes who had survived a trial by fire that solidified their bond. Not every player wanted to recoup quickly: D. H. Long wrote to Miller that the doctor had cleared him to leave Louisville and return to school, although he thought he might be able to stretch a few more days out of his injury. This attitude prevailed back on campus as well. While Stone scheduled classes to start after a few days of mourning, the students found themselves too bereaved to return to the classroom for well over a week.⁶²

Stone's initial response had been to comfort the bereaved families. In the ensuing weeks and months, he tried to balance the loss by

⁶¹G. B. Skrapp to "Buusch," note in D. H. Long letter, Simon [Simeon] Miller Scrapbook, Alumni File.

⁶²Purdue University *Exponent*, November 11, 1903; "Injured in Wreck," clipping, Simon [Simeon] Miller Scrapbook; "Sim Miller and Harry Leslie, Last Two Victims in Hospital," clipping, n.d., *ibid.*; "School Work Listlessly Resumed at Lafayette," clipping, November 3, 1903, *ibid.*

working toward a memorial to “noble youths.” Only a day or so after the wreck, a Lafayette area man suggested building a gymnasium as the best way to remember the day. The *Lafayette Journal* applauded the suggestion and immediately began taking donations and channeling them to Purdue. Both Stone and the students saw the benefits of such an endeavor and quickly assumed fundraising responsibilities. The administration formed a committee with Stone at its head to solicit contributions and manage the funds that arrived from alumni groups around the country. The president made fundraising speeches at alumni meetings, courted the general public, and solicited corporate funds by characterizing the dead as martyrs in Purdue’s mission to produce well-rounded leaders.

As the memorial efforts struggled over the next few years, students took it upon themselves to remind the community of the wreck’s human toll. The media blitz via the *Debris* and *Exponent* kept alive the image of the dead and what the students thought they represented. These efforts linked the dead players’ honor with Memorial Gymnasium fundraising:

No [sic] vain was the struggle, for aye to the fore—
and ne’er in dishonor—our banner you bore;
And proudly we’ll bear her, and carry her thro’,
Inspired by your Knighthood, *Brave Sons of Purdue!*
And here we will build you “Memorial Hall,”
Emblazon your glory on turret and wall,
And the future will sing of those *Chieftains of Old*
Who gave up their lives for the *Black and Old Gold*.

Despite student efforts, the memorial committee’s fundraising goal of \$100,000 was not met. Contributions came slowly after an early rush of popular subscriptions, public gifts, and alumni and student donations. The committee discarded the idea of a union and built only a gymnasium, collecting the last \$15,000 of the \$85,000 raised as a donation from the Big Four Railroad.⁶³

The building suited Stone’s needs rather than those of the students. He wanted an institutional structure to reinforce his ideal of physical culture. Just as Fowler Hall provided a space in which to pursue the arts, a gymnasium permitted students to work on their physiques. The building might also remind them of the wreck’s lessons on their roles in the university and their goals for their education:

I wish to say that you are undergoing a training calculated . . . to impress upon you the power and unchangeability of the laws of nature. . . . Your life work will hereafter consist in directing and operating natural forces. . . . You are now brought face to face with an appalling disregard for these forces. It should be a lesson ineffaceably impressed

⁶³Purdue University *Exponent*, October 27, 1905; “To the Citizens of Lafayette and West Lafayette,” open letter from Stone published in the *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, Purdue Football Train Wreck File, Special Collections; “The Following Resolutions are Submitted by the Alumni Association,” *ibid.*; Purdue University *Exponent*, November 11, December 2, 1903.



THE MEMORIAL GYMNASIUM WAS PRESIDENT STONE'S IDEA FOR COMMEMORATING THE STUDENTS KILLED IN THE TRAIN WRECK. THE GYM, DEDICATED IN 1908, TODAY IS HOME TO THE COMPUTER SCIENCES DEPARTMENT.

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

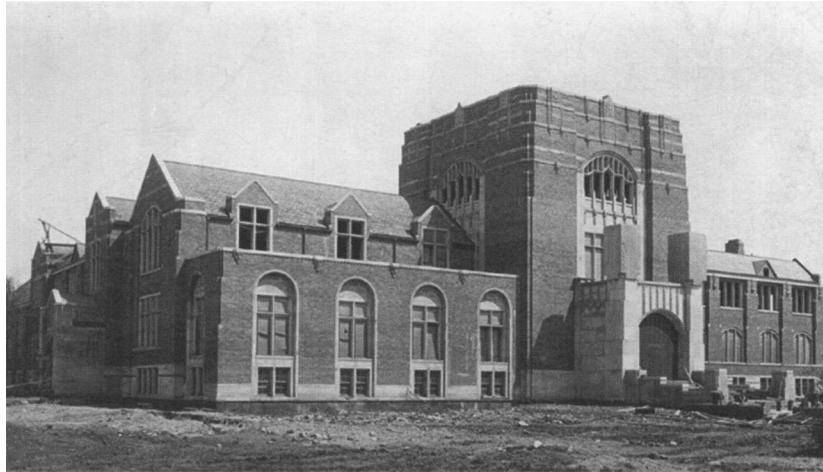
upon your minds to be true to your responsibilities and to be honest in the performance of duty.⁶⁴

At the dedication of the new building in 1908, Stone told his audience, most of whom had not been enrolled at Purdue when the accident occurred, that the "great truth" of the event centered on the ability of the university as an institution to progress despite adversity and to offer possibilities for future generations of Purdue students. The tragedy, he added, had reshaped and continued to reshape Purdue:

So out of grief and sorrow has come in the first place a precious memory of noble youths. A memory which for generations to come should leave its impress upon student character at Purdue, to make it more courageous and in the discharge of duty, more gentle and sympathetic in its intercourse with others and more lofty in its aspirations and ideals. And in the second place this beautiful building is a tangible and appropriate reminder of the high ideals of physical culture and athletic prowess, which those young men exemplified . . . It is no stretch of fancy to think that into these shall be breathed something of the spirit of the departed ones, and one may well believe that the true memorial which we are today dedicating is to be not a sacred memory, not a structure of bricks or mortar but a living vital spirit, perpetuated in the students of Purdue University.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Purdue University *Exponent*, November 13, 1903.

⁶⁵Stone, "Address of President Stone at Gymnasium Dedication," May 30, 1908, Stone Papers.



PURDUE MEMORIAL UNION, SHOWN UNDER CONSTRUCTION, OPENED IN 1924. THE UNION REFLECTED STUDENT EFFORTS TO HONOR THE DEAD AND AT THE SAME TIME ACHIEVE GREATER CONTROL OVER STUDENT CULTURE.

Courtesy: Purdue University Special Collections

The students shared Stone's desire to augment the campus's physical facilities but were more interested in a building that would provide a social setting. They wanted a place to work out and improve their physiques, but they also wanted a student union to serve as a social center with rooms for meetings, pool tables, and dances. Although they turned to off-campus haunts for fun, they also needed a site on campus for their rapidly multiplying student organizations. A gymnasium with a student union in it could provide male students not only a place to play sports and act masculine, but also offices for class, club, and fraternity meetings, and, they hoped, a poolroom where they could smoke and enjoy fraternal company. It soon became apparent that the gymnasium failed their expectations. The small lounging room proved a popular place to rest, and the pool attracted large numbers of visitors, but male students found that they could not use the gymnasium as they wished. The space had to meet the demands of coeds, faculty, varsity teams, and the ROTC, which used it as drilling grounds in the winter. As many students saw it, the gymnasium represented Stone's ideas, rather than theirs.⁶⁶

These shortcomings led the classes of 1912 and 1913 to form the Purdue Union in 1912. Unlike the Memorial Gymnasium, the movement for the Purdue Memorial Union derived solely from student

⁶⁶*Purdue Alumnus*, II (March 1915), 25; Purdue University, *Debris*, 279; Purdue University *Exponent*, February 25, 1904, May 5, 12, 1905, October 10, 1906, December 18, 1908, September 10, 1909, September 15, 1911.

initiative. The union as an organization emerged because of the need for an institution to facilitate the students' social development. The students knew that the Memorial Gymnasium could not be an adequate social center, so they organized the student body as a whole to raise money for a union building. That drive succeeded because its purpose was to build an institution that reflected new ideas about gender roles and college life.⁶⁷

Fundraisers invoked a gift-giving tradition held over from the Memorial Gymnasium drive. In this way, the students continued to commemorate the anniversary of the train wreck to goad students and alumni into contributing to the union fund. The emphasis on the wreck shifted away from the dead and toward its commemorative aspects.⁶⁸ On the anniversary of the event, the Purdue *Exponent* recounted the accident, detailed how the gym came into being, and described what it represented. Students were heavily featured in these accounts; the paper noted that while they had a gym, they still had no place to enjoy social fellowship. As the contributions slowed to a trickle, the newly founded *Purdue Alumnus* magazine took the lead in reinvigorating the drive. Though it spoke to all graduates, the appeal was mainly to recent graduates. Indeed, students who had matriculated since 1908 dominated the magazine and the fundraising effort. Fundraising picked up temporarily before falling again. Then the union stumbled onto a bit of luck.⁶⁹

The patriotism generated by the United States' participation in the First World War provided a much-needed boost to the project. The *Purdue Alumnus* used the swelling nationalism associated with the war to convince its readers that the union should be both a memorial and a nursery of patriotism. In teaching students how to act as modern men, the union would reflect efforts to combat postwar Red Scare evils—immoral behavior, socialism, and (at least implicitly) the threats presented by Jews, Catholics, and African Americans—by becoming a place to develop Americanism. In its memorial capacity, it would serve as a space where returning alumni could meet and remember everything good about the men who died while carrying out the Purdue mission. Contributors responded to this propaganda both on campus and off. Huge amounts of money came in from the wealthy alumni who prospered in the booming postwar economy. They eventually pledged one million dollars, although getting them to pay up became harder as the years passed. The *Exponent* and the *Alumnus* continued to mark the anniversary of the wreck in order to

⁶⁷*Purdue Alumnus*, II (March 1915), 25.

⁶⁸*Purdue University Exponent*, October 31, 1912, October 31, 1913, October 31, 1914, October 31, 1915, October 31, 1916, October 31, 1917; *Purdue University Debris* (1924), 134.

⁶⁹*Purdue Alumnus*, II (February 1915), 18-19; *ibid.*, II (March 1915), 25; *ibid.*, V (October 1917), 14; *Purdue University Exponent*, April 2, 1915; Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 152.

remind potential contributors of student needs. In 1922 and 1923, with the building nearing completion and the funds not yet all collected, the union committee invoked the war dead once again, and publicized the fear that the union might never be completed if pledges were not paid. They charged delinquent contributors with failing to honor fallen heroes and demonstrating that Purdue's graduates possessed neither the patriotism nor the wealth to contribute to the union. These threats proved strong enough to finish the collection, and the union opened in 1924. The fact that less than a quarter of the money raised was donated between 1912 and 1914 suggests that the memory of the World War I dead was more effective in raising money than the memory of the train wreck victims.⁷⁰

The completion of the Purdue Memorial Union marked the beginning of the large-scale expansion of Purdue's campus. After Stone died at age fifty-nine in a mountain-climbing accident in the Canadian Rockies during the summer of 1921, Edward C. Elliott was named Purdue president. Elliott was willing to employ alumni and corporations in Purdue expansions, which filled the university coffers and foreshadowed the post-World War II growth that created the Purdue of today.⁷¹

The Union gave the students a place to hone their social skills, serving the same purpose in the social sphere that the classroom served in the academic and the gymnasium in the physical spheres of Purdue undergraduate life. To general manager J. C. Walters, the Union fostered "an education on the side of humanity."⁷² The building provided a place where men and women joined in mixed groups and still maintained gendered roles. Dining halls and a ballroom gave them a space in which to interact. At the same time, the Union facilitated the segregation of the sexes, by way of men's and women's lounges. Men could also retreat to the male sanctuaries of the barbershop and pool hall. Thus, student culture accepted women and, at the same time, provided men an escape into the comfortable confines of fraternity. In sum, the Union updated traditional student culture to fit the emerging 1920s' culture of youth.⁷³

⁷⁰*Purdue Alumnus*, VI (January 1919), 1-2; *ibid.*, VII (May 1920), 12-13; *ibid.*, VIII (November 1920), 13-15; *ibid.*, IX (December 1921), 7; *ibid.*, IX (April 1922), 8; *ibid.*, XII (July 1924), 1; *ibid.*, XII (January 1925), 1-2; Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*, 8-9, 45-46; David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York, 1980), 90-91.

⁷¹Purdue University, *Winthrop Ellsworth Stone, Born June 12, 1862, Died July 17, 1921, President of Purdue University, 1900-1921, a Memorial* (West Lafayette, Ind., 1922); Walter Scholer, *The Building of a Red Brick Campus: the Growth of Purdue as Recalled by Walter Scholer* (Lafayette, Ind., 1983), 9-10, 13-14; Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 184-245.

⁷²J. C. Walters, "General Manager's Report and Financial Survey," September 1, 1925, Purdue Memorial Union File, University Special Collections.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 5-10.

What happened at Purdue during these years is representative of the changes that were underway across all of American higher education. The college world grew more bureaucratic, women made their way into public spaces, and the more ostentatious displays of coltish energy, such as rushes, scraps, burnings, and mock funerals, first became more organized and then were discarded as immature. While reflecting its particular history, Purdue joined the general trend of universities grafting traditional values onto a modern, corporate structure.⁷⁴

It was the interaction between the students and Winthrop Stone that drove this process. In the early years of his administration, Stone had waged a war against an undisciplined student culture in an attempt to make Purdue a nationally renowned school. His charges agreed that they attended college to train for a career and that they wanted an education that provided the opportunity to prosper as adults. Yet the world students created, which valued local identities, anti-establishmentarianism, and violence, often ran contrary to this goal. "College life" provided their last chance to enjoy youthful self-indulgence before assuming adult roles as parents and providers. This changed during the second half of Stone's tenure, as the process of memorializing, first those who died in the train wreck and then the World War I heroes, brought the students' own increasing tendencies to organize college life in line with Stone's efforts to reconfigure Purdue into a modern university. As student culture became more structured, students tried to regulate the traditions and rituals of college life, but eventually did away with them when they "outlived [their] usefulness."⁷⁵

The original design for the Memorial Gymnasium appealed to male students because it promised a venue in which they could enhance their masculinity through exercise and athletic competition, as well as poolrooms where they could relax. The social needs of all students were to be addressed by offering meeting rooms for the growing list of clubs and other organizations. When, in the name of economy, Stone cut these latter features from the plans, reducing the gymnasium to a strictly athletic facility, student interest waned. Since the university had neglected their social needs, students decided to take responsibility for them by launching a fundraising drive to build the Purdue Union, a facility they truly could call their own. After it

⁷⁴For a few examples of this process at other schools see Robert C. Alberts, *Pitt: The Story of the University of Pittsburgh, 1787-1987* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1986), 54-73, 79-92; Colcott, *History of the University of Maryland*, 228-80; David R. Conosta, *Villanova University, 1842-1992: American-Catholic-Augustinian* (University Park, Pa., 1995), 55-83; Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1848-1925* (4 vols., Madison, Wis., 1949), II, 130-33, 159-232; Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens, Ga., 1985), 153-73; and Gray, *University of Minnesota*, 193-239.

⁷⁵Purdue University, *Debris* (1916), 347.

opened, the Union maintained a safe distance from the administration, operating without university funds and offering leisure pursuits that Stone had not approved beforehand.⁷⁶

The students' vision for the Union was more farsighted than Stone's for the Memorial Gymnasium. By the mid-1930s, the gym was obsolete and was replaced by Lambert Fieldhouse. For awhile it was used for women's athletics and intramural sports before being transformed into the home of the computer sciences department in 1985. The Purdue Memorial Union still exists as the showpiece of student culture on the Purdue campus. It continually reshapes itself, most recently through renovating the hotel annex and by keeping the services it provides the student community up-to-date with contemporary culture.⁷⁷

Boisterous behavior, especially in the wake of major athletic victories and defeats, has not disappeared from Purdue. One Boilermaker's statement that he was not angry "because we lost" the women's NCAA national basketball championship but was "just happy to riot," indicates that a streak of rebellion for its own sake is found in today's students as it was in those at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁸ In a letter to the editors of the *Exponent*, the writer explained that "students participated in the riot because . . . [i]t's a bit dangerous; it destroys property; but the fact remains that it's fun" and that it "made one feel like a *rebel, above the law, powerful, and social*" [emphasis added].⁷⁹ Even as official and student cultures continue to accommodate one another, it seems safe to say that at least some laws of college custom have proven as inexorable as those dictated by chemistry or physics.

⁷⁶Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 6-7; Stephen Haber, "Anything Goes: Mexico's 'New' Cultural History," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, LXXIX (May 1999), 309-10, 320; Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York, 1978), 118; Rudolph, *American College and University*, 440-41.

⁷⁷Topping, *Century and Beyond*, 157.

⁷⁸Purdue University *Exponent*, April 2, 2001.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, April 23, 2001.