

1869



Charter for the Normal School

The precursors to modern teachers' colleges, PA's Normal Schools would train high school-aged students to become elementary school teachers by instructing them in the norms of curriculum, pedagogy and behavior.

As West Chester increased in wealth after the Civil War, meetings at the Court-house are held concerning the future of the West Chester Academy, which had been a private high school founded in 1813. On August 23, they decide to close it, sell its assets, and create a Normal School. The next year, the Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted a resolution, issuing this charter for the Normal School.

Normal School Charter on loan from Special Collections.

1870-71



Construction of Normal School Begins

Construction of the Normal School begins in September 1870 by laying the cornerstone by the State Superintendent of Public Schools. The building, now known as Old Main, is then certified as a public building on February 22, 1871, and completed in late September—delaying the first semester by two weeks as builders scramble to finish.

Silver spoon (late 1800s) commemorating Old Main's construction on loan from the Chester County History Center.

1881-1920



George Morris Philips

Principal George M. Philips leads the Normal School, overseeing its first great expansion. This includes adding 36 acres to campus, and increasing the student body tenfold. An astute communicator, he amasses an impressive collection of autographed first edition books from famous personalities with whom he would correspond, including Frederick Douglass.

Original desk and 1920 Amulet memorializing Philips on loan from Special Collections.

1886



Temperance Club Founded

The Young Women's Christian Temperance Union is organized. This is the largest of many temperance clubs lasting until Prohibition, with male and female members pledging to abstain except in cases of "emergency".

1890



First Gym Built

Recognizing the importance of athletic training, the Normal School builds its first gymnasium. It is believed to be the first gym in the United States to feature an indoor track.



1892



Recitation Hall Constructed

Recitation Hall is built to increase the number of classrooms, and to house a small library. Today, it is the oldest building on campus.



1892



Ehingers Develop Health Science Program

Dr. Clyde Ehinger and his wife Ella Ehinger are hired as joint Directors of Physical Training, a precursor to today's College of Health Sciences. The second gymnasium was named after them in their honor.

First *Amulet* Published

On February 1st, the first edition of the student newspaper, *The Amulet*, is published. Highlighting events on campus, commentaries from students, and relevant world content, *The Amulet* would eventually be renamed *The Quad* in 1975.

Early edition of the Amulet on loan from Special Collections.

1892



Infirmery Built

An Infirmery and Quarantine Hospital is created to handle sicknesses and epidemics. This hospital would treat Spanish Flu patients during 1918.



1895



Frederick Douglass Delivers Last Speech

On February 1st, at the invitation of Principal Philips, Frederick Douglass delivers his last public speech at West Chester Normal School nineteen days before his death. In this speech Douglass talks about racism in America as well as pride in black heritage.

Autographed copy of the Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, given to Philips, on loan from the Philips Autograph Library / Office of the President.

1896



Teddy Roosevelt Speaks

Theodore Roosevelt gives a lecture on campus about “Americanism”. He also denounces lynching and speaks about reforming the criminal justice system.

1898



Cuban Support on Campus

A wave of patriotism sweeps the school during the Spanish-American War as flags are hung in dorm windows. While Cuban students had been attending since 1881, our campus would see an influx of Cuban students after the US victory.

1899



Ruby Jones Hall Built

The Demonstration School is built. A working elementary school, it is staffed by professional instructors and Normal School student-teachers who would educate the faculty's children, along with those from the greater West Chester community. Renamed Ruby Jones Hall after WCU's first faculty member of color, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



1900



Students meet the U.S. President in D.C.

The senior class begins a three-day trip to Washington, D.C. led by Principal Philips. There, they meet U.S. President William McKinley, Secretary of State John Hay, and Congressman Thomas S. Butler—a Normal School alumnus. Philips had arranged the first DC trip in 1896.



1902



Old Library is Built

On June 3rd, construction of Old Library is completed. For over half a century the iconic building serves as a meeting area and a library, where staff would fetch books from the stacks for students. The magnificent 2-story atrium seen here is now the site of the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology.



1906



Woodrow Wilson Speaks

On January 12th, Woodrow Wilson delivers a lecture on patriotism. He would become the 28th President of the US in 1913.

1909



Normal School Certificate

According to the Pennsylvania Normal School Act of 1857, schools in 12 districts who upheld high academic standards could grant teaching degrees to graduates.

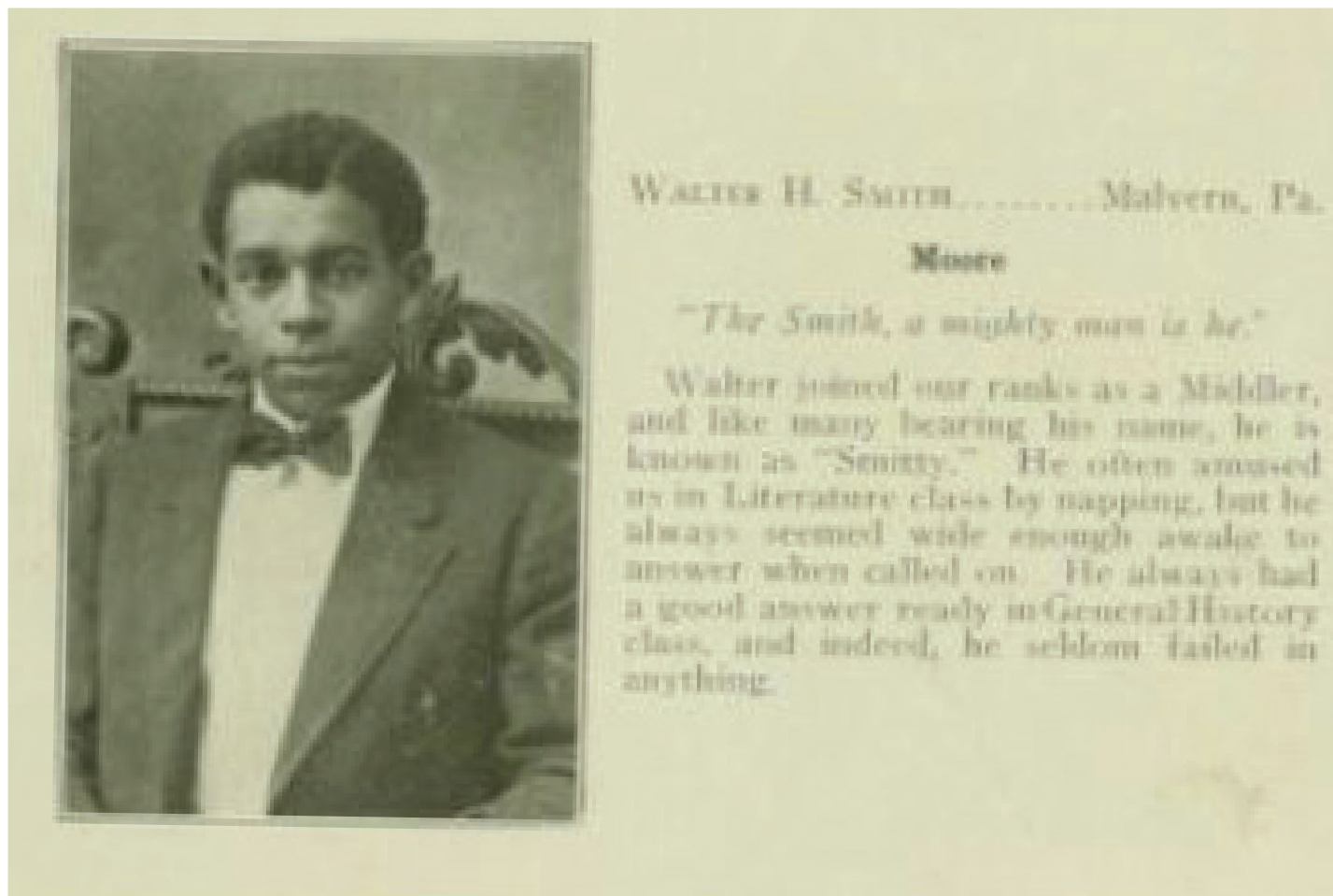
Diploma on loan from Special Collections.

1910



First Black Student Graduates

The first confirmed black student, Walter H. Smith, graduates from West Chester Normal School. He would later serve in World War I and II and became a principal in Atlantic City, NJ.



1911



Wayne Hall Constructed

Wayne Hall, an all-male dorm, is built along Church Street. It is now used for faculty offices.

1917



WWI Student Leaves for the Front

A Normal School student is pictured with a loved one before heading off to war. Over 4.7 million American men and women serve in the armed forces during the conflict.



1917



Red Cross on Campus

On May 2nd, the Southeastern Chapter of the American Red Cross requests surgical dressings for the troops fighting in World War I. The Normal School donates 3000, in addition to 4367 sent earlier, to equip a base hospital in France.

1918



Spanish Flu Outbreak on Campus

On October 4th, the borough's Board of Health orders a "Strict Quarantine for West Chester," closing most businesses. However, the Normal School remains open, instead instituting restrictions on gatherings, such as no morning meetings. The Infirmary would treat patients, through only a handful contracts the illness and the scare is over within two weeks. Personifying the virus, a pithy description in the *Amulet* states that after a few students succumbed to 'Enza's "charms", others became fearful and fled campus. The writer laments the loss of "quite a few of our friends" who went home, more than any loss of life from the pandemic that would claim over 50 million people worldwide.

William Howard Taft lectures

On January 11th, William Howard Taft opens the 1918 lecture series. The former U.S. President was the sitting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at the time of the speech—the only person to hold both of these powerful roles.

1919



Student Army Training Corps

The SATC is established in the waning days of World War I to ready students for military service. It is the precursor to the modern ROTC program.

1921



Music Education Develops on Campus

Claude E. Hausknecht is appointed the first Director of Music, ushering in the development of the music program at the Normal School. In December, the first music-filled Christmas Candlelight Service is conducted in the chapel in Old Main, and in 1929 the first music summer school would begin. The Music Department would be accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music in 1958, and reorganized into the School of Music in 1967.

Drumhead from the State Teachers College era on loan from the Wells School of Music.

1923



Football Team Wins

The most successful football team in WCU's history features two black athletes, London Jones and Warren Burton. After their undefeated season, they would both go on to lengthy careers—London at West Chester and Warren at Cheyney.



1927



Philips Memorial Hall Completed

After Principal Philips' death, faculty, students and alumni raise money for the construction of Philips Memorial Hall. It houses meeting rooms and Philips Autograph Library to hold his extensive autographed book collection. Finished in time for graduation in 1927, the building becomes one of our iconic structures on campus—and is even used in WCU's official logo in the early 21st century.