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From Prayer Meeting to University*

BY JAMES MADISON NABRIT

HOWARD UNIVERSITY had its origin in the days immediately following the Civil War. Slavery as a labor system had been abolished in law and in fact, and freedom was a condition for all the people. Thousands of the freedmen flocked from Virginia, Maryland, the border states and from farther south to the Capital of the Nation. The presence of a group forming about one-third of the population of the city of Washington, emphasized the necessity both of educating the masses and of preparing trained leaders for them.

BORN IN PRAYER

The idea which gave birth to Howard University grew out of the Monthly Concert of Prayer for Missions which was held in the First Congregational Church of Washington, D. C., November 19, 1866. On the following evening, ten persons assembled at the home of H. A. Brewster and decided unanimously to establish an educational institution, "in view of the pressing demand of the southern field" according to the words of the resolution which was passed.

Action was taken at the meeting giving the school the designation of Howard Theological Seminary, after General Oliver Otis Howard, who had been active in the organization of the project. General Howard personally protested having the honor accorded him, but accepted it reluctantly at the pressing invitation of the others at the meeting. At a meeting on January 8, 1867, the name of the institution was changed to Howard University. It has always been open to all races and both sexes.

Oliver Otis Howard, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point with the class of 1854, was appointed

* This is a brief sketch of Howard University, Washington, D. C., as it rounds out three-quarters of a century, 1867 to 1942. Mr. Nabrit is a graduate of Morehouse College and received his doctor of jurisprudence from Northwestern University. While associate professor of law he served for one year as executive assistant to President Mordecai W. Johnson. At present he is the secretary of Howard University.

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colonel of a Maine Regiment in 1861. After service which distinguished him at Bull Run he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. Following his services at Fair Oaks and Antietam he was promoted to the rank of major general. He was assigned to the command of an army corps in the army of the Cumberland and then to the command of the army of the Tennessee. He accompanied General Sherman on his march to the sea and was present at the surrender of General Johnston near Durham, North Carolina, in 1865. He was appointed commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 and remained in this office until 1874. It was while serving in this capacity that his interest in a university for the Negro population arose. He was regarded by a contemporary as "the American Philanthropist, the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, the true friend of the downtrodden and oppressed of every color and nation on the earth."

During February, 1867, the organization of the University was carried rapidly forward, and plans were made for the application for a charter from the Congress of the United States. The first draft of the application, presented January 26, 1867, was amended on February 6; and, having passed the Senate and the House of Representatives comprising the Thirty-ninth Congress, was approved by President Andrew Johnson on March 2, 1867. The anniversary of this day is observed as Charter Day at the University from year to year, with appropriate exercises.

The act to incorporate Howard University declared that "there be established and is hereby established in the District of Columbia, a university for the education of youth in the liberal arts and sciences under the name, style, and title of The Howard University."

The incorporators included Samuel C. Pomeroy, Charles B. Boynton, Oliver O. Howard, Burton C. Cook, Charles H. Howard, James B. Hutchinson, Henry A. Brewster, Benjamin F. Morris, Danforth B. Nichols, William G. Finney, Roswell H. Stephens, E. M. Cushman, Hiram Barber, E. W. Robinson, W. F. Bascom, James B. Johnson, and Silas L. Loomis.

PRESIDENTS COME AND GO

In the 73 years prior to 1942 Howard University had thirteen

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presidents, two vice-presidents, and probably eleven acting presidents. Two of the presidents, Whipple in 1875 and Gregg in 1926 did not accept the honor. Of the presidents, twelve were preachers; one, Howard, a layman. Amzi L. Barber, John Mercer Langston, and Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, acting presidents at various times, were also laymen. Six were Congregationalists: Boynton, Howard, Patton, Rankin, Newman and Durkee; two Methodists: Gregg and Thirkield; one Baptist: Johnson; two Presbyterians: Sunderland and Gordon. Twelve were born above the Mason and Dixon Line and one, Johnson, below that line; one in Canada: Durkee. Three were chaplains in the House of Representatives or Senate of the United States: Boynton, Sunderland, and Rankin. Four were or had been pastors in Washington, D. C.: Boynton, Rankin and Newman of the First Congregational Church, and Sunderland of the First Presbyterian Church. The oldest, at the time of appointment, was Rankin—62; the youngest, Johnson—36. Howard was 38 when elected in 1869. All but one—Boynton—were college graduates. Boynton left college in his senior year. Gregg was a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Thirkield resigned the presidency of Howard University to become a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The average term in office of the eleven active presidents was in 1940, 6 years and 6 months; the longest, that of Johnson, 15 years; the shortest, that of Gordon, 3 years and 1 month. Not one died in office. Smith died at sea on his way to Africa before entering upon the duties of the office, and Patton died upon the day his resignation took effect. Of the presidents who did not accept, one, Whipple, was white, and one, Gregg, was a Negro. Of the two vice-presidents, one, Langston, was a Negro, and one, Brewster, was white. Of all the presidents, only Johnson, the thirteenth, was a Negro.*

PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S PROGRESSIVE ADMINISTRATION

During the administration of President Mordecai W. Johnson, the University has made unparalleled progress in each of its schools and colleges: the Graduate School, the College of Liberal

* Howard University. The Capstone of Negro Education, Walter Dyson, The Graduate School, Howard University, Washington, D. C.

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Arts, the School of Engineering and Architecture, the School of Music, the College of Dentistry, the College of Medicine, the College of Pharmacy, the School of Law, the School of Religion and the Summer School.

Annual appropriations for the University were authorized in 1928 by an act of Congress, amending the Act of Incorporation of March 2, 1867, for the purpose of aiding "in the construction, development, improvement and maintenance of the University."

The College of Dentistry was reorganized and placed upon a four-year basis, and approved by the dental authorities of New York State in 1930. The Law School was reorganized and placed on a full day schedule, and was approved by the American Bar Association and the American Association of Law Schools in 1933. The School of Religion was placed on a graduate level and fully accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools in 1939. The College of Liberal Arts was placed on the approved list of the Association of American Universities in 1939. The Division of Social Work of the Graduate School was admitted to membership as a type one member in the American Association of Schools of Social Work in 1940. The College of Pharmacy was accredited by the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education in 1940. The School of Religion moved into its new home in 1939, formerly the Carnegie library building, and acquired an outstanding library collection of 39,000 volumes in 1940.

Funds have been secured from private philanthropy for faculty salary increases, for fellowships, for large additions to the several college libraries, and for specialized research. During the period since the passage of the substantive law in 1928, the capital assets of the University have been more than trebled, its book collection more than doubled, its movable and flexible scientific and educational equipment modernized and trebled, the total number of teachers increased by 60%, the total number of full-time teachers increased 98.7%, so as to place 88% of instruction in their charge, with the result that the University as a whole has moved 72% of the way toward a first class faculty and administrative staff, 67.5% of the way toward first class adequacy in flexible and educational scientific equipment and supplies, and more than 50% of the way toward a first class educational plant.

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Three years ago the salary floor was lifted for the entire rank of instructors. The average salary in this rank is now \$1,923 as compared with \$1,650 in 1926-1927. The average salary of full-time teachers in the assistant professorial rank is now \$2,584 as compared with \$1,822 in 1926-1927. In the associate professorial rank the average salary of full-time teachers for 1939-1940 was \$3,304 as compared with \$2,243 in 1926-1927. In the rank of full-time professor, exclusive of deans and administrative officers, the average salary is \$4,171 as compared with \$2,792 in 1926-1927, including deans. Sixty-five teachers at Howard have earned doctorate degrees while 45.78% of the Liberal Arts faculty have doctorate degrees.

Regulations governing tenure have been adopted and revised by the trustees after consultation with faculty and non-teaching representatives. A retirement system has been adopted providing an annuity of from one-third to one-half average annual income on payment of premium of 5% of the salary by teacher matched by similar payment of 5% by the University.

The achievements above-mentioned are milestones in the progress of the University which has yet a great distance to go in reaching its maximum efficiency. President Johnson expressed this quite effectively in his annual report for 1940-41 when he stated that: "The outstanding needs of the University, made increasingly clear during the year, were: (1) immediate increases in the number of teachers in the graduate school, in the clinical branches of medicine and in the school of engineering and architecture; (2) an increase of 30 in the number of mature teachers of professorial rank; (3) an increase of \$7,000 annually to make important supplements to the gravely deficient book collection in our library; (4) the doubling of funds for scholarships and student aid, especially for teachers in the South, who receive low salaries and may not otherwise find it possible to pursue the graduate work which they need to increase their efficiency; (5) increased funds for at least that minimum of research which is necessary to maintain a living mind in the members of the teaching staff; and (6) the following buildings: (a) a well-equipped building to house the school of engineering and architecture; (b) a modern building and equipment for the work in dentistry;

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(c) an administration building for the centralization and proper inter-relation of the administrative services of the University; and (d) an auditorium building which would contain provisions for the school of music, the department of art and the work of dramatics, and (e) an armory to accommodate the Reserve Officer's Training Corps."

THE ALUMNI SERVE

The majority of Howard University's 11,106 graduates are serving as teachers, devoting their lives to the training of the youth and the building of a system of education in the South; 1,861 of them have become physicians and surgeons (the number approximates 48% of all Negro physicians and surgeons now practicing); 849 have become dentists (the number approximates 49% of all Negro dentists now practicing); 1,249 have become lawyers (the number approximates 96% of all Negro lawyers now practicing); 615 have become leaders in religion; 527 are pharmacists; 149 have entered the fields of engineering and architecture and other applied sciences; while 171 have gone into finance and commerce. In every Negro population center of the United States these graduates are at work and have had a major share in the development of the Negro people.