

# THE ACADEMY

## HISTORICAL

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The supreme aim of the founders of Howard University was to "educate youth in the liberal arts and sciences," or as General O. O. Howard stated the aim in 1869, "to furnish the means of general and professional culture to all, whether white or colored, male or female, who should seek its advantages."

Liberal culture involves a basic training which looks forward to further achievement. The degree and efficiency of higher achievement is directly related to the thoroughness and soundness of the foundation.

Realizing the nature of higher education, and the importance of the fullest preparation for its successful pursuit, the Trustees of Howard University lost no time after the incorporation of the University by Congress, March 2, 1867 in setting up the machinery for the secondary education of colored youth. There were at the time no existing agencies taking proper care of this pressing need of the race. The necessities of the war demanded prompt action. A newly emancipated people were hungering and thirsting after education. Primary and grammar schools were being opened throughout the States for the benefit of a class, hitherto wholly deprived of educational advantages. The duty of making adequate provision for meeting this situation and for laying a sure foundation for achievement in the liberal arts became an unescapable duty of Howard.

Therefore, May 1, 1867 precisely fifty-nine days after charter day of the University, the Normal and Preparatory Department of Howard University felt its first heart throb. At once it began its mission with two distinct objectives in view, (a) teacher training and (b) college fitting. The first catalogue made this announcement:—"This Department is designed to give a thorough preparation to those who wish to pursue a collegiate course, as well as to furnish normal training to those who desire to enter at once upon the work of teaching." The opening of the Normal and Preparatory Department was the first step taken by the Trustees towards academic work at Howard University. For this purpose a building was rented and fitted up on Seventh Street, now Georgia Avenue. In the meantime, the present location of the

University was purchased as a permanent site, consisting at first of one hundred and fifty acres.

At this point, it is interesting to note that many of the magnificent trees that adorn the campus were planted by preparatory boys. During the year 1868-1869, there were eleven students in the preparatory course. This number was remarkably augmented the following year, when the number of students in this work alone increased to eighty-one.

This dual arrangement, that of training teachers and of preparing for college under one departmental administration was not long-lived. The preparatory classes were meeting a popular demand, and were being eagerly sought.

After a short length of time, the tasks of college preparation assumed such magnitude and importance that in 1871 the Preparatory Department was set apart as an individual unit in the scheme of the University organization.

On June 12, 1872 the graduating class from the Preparatory Department numbered twenty-nine.

In 1885 it was happily announced that the avowed purpose of the authorities was to establish at Howard a fitting school of the best New England type for all the Southland.

In 1906, the name Preparatory Department was changed to The Academy. The curriculum was promptly revised and made in harmony with the courses offered in the best academies. Watchful eyes have been ever alert to keep the Academy abreast of the times and up to the requirements and methods regarded as standard.

This glimpse of the early history of the Academy clearly points out that its first aim was distinctly college preparation. This traditional policy was wisely modified to meet the needs of the youth looking forward to professional study and also to prepare for citizenship and life those who had not the time, inclination or means for acquiring a higher education. The curriculum while featuring the classical and scientific courses, yet possessed a degree of flexibility which adapted it to the varying needs and tastes of those who sought only a good high school education.

The courses of study offered in the Academy meet the requirements of the National Committee on Standards of Colleges and Secondary Schools. This committee is a national body, composed of all the sectional associations of colleges and preparatory schools, including the Carnegie Foundation.

The Academy is therefore, an accredited secondary school, requiring for graduation sixteen units of standard secondary

work above the standard eight-grade grammar school course.

Being an accredited school, its graduates on the certification of the dean, have entered well nigh all of the eastern colleges and not a few in the middle west. They have stood the test with credit and have carried the banner high. Boys of the right stuff have been sent and we have been asked if we have any more like them. Thus the Academy has given abundant evidence of the character and quality of its work.

Former President Thirkield in one of his reports to the Secretary of the Interior, thus spoke of the Academy—"The Academy furnishes a broad and thorough preparatory course fitting for college, such as is offered in the best academies of the country."

Former President Newman in similar reports made these favorable comments: "The work of our Academy is uniformly of a very high order. The studies are those of a well regulated modern high school." "The high rank of this part of our work . . . . makes it possible for graduates from the Academy to enter the higher departments of institutions in different parts of the country without loss of grade." "Very high standards are maintained, and our diploma is recognized by the best institutions of the country." "This department ranks among the best preparatory schools of the country."

In the fifty-two years of its existence, 1867-1919, the Academy has had ample time to discover its true work and to adjust itself to the most approved standards and methods in the accomplishment of its tasks.

It has followed no prescription for the secondary education of Negro youth. The prescription for the secondary education of American youth has been its prescription. The best is none too good for our girls and boys.

The Academy has always been national in representation among its student body, attracting last year its youth from thirty-three states of the United States, from the District of Columbia and from five foreign lands. The number from the District of Columbia was comparatively negligible. By far, the largest percentage came from the states south of the Potomac and east of the Mississippi.

Across the years, the Academy has stood for the development of fine character, for diligence and fidelity in the performance of every duty and for the forming of habits of regular and sustained study; in fine it has uniformly stood for thorough intellectual, moral, and physical training. Its

cherished motto is: **HARD WORK, FAIR PLAY, CLEAN LIFE.**

With the close of the current school year, the Academy will cease to function. After devoting its life, during the fifty-two years, entirely to the uplift of a backward people, it will presently close its doors. This does not mean that the University has ceased to interest itself in the secondary education of Negro youth. It means that the energies of the University thus released will be dedicated to the advancement of the work in the South; that these energies will be directed to quickening and strengthening the many secondary schools throughout the entire Southland.

By means of definite plans now on foot on the part of the University looking to a closer relationship and a fuller cooperation with these schools, their educational efficiency will be greatly increased.

The total number of graduates of the Academy at the close of the present school year will exceed eight hundred. Most of them have entered the colleges and professional schools of Old Howard, while a considerable number have completed their academic career at the eastern colleges.

The Academy has had only three deans during existence, as follows: Cyrus S. Richards, LL. D., 1871 to 1885; George J. Cummings, A. M., 1885 to 1914; Charles S. Syphax, A. B., LL. M., 1914 to 1919.



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