

HISTORY

A SHORT

Walter Johns, former U of A president is writing a massive volume on the history of the University. Now retired, Dr. Johns started the book after completing his term as president in 1969. Gateway interviewed Dr. Johns in his office in the Humanities Building. With 14 chapters on the period of 1908 to 1948, the book is half finished.

1906 1908

It all began in 1906 when the Alberta legislature passed an act to establish the university. The following year, Premier Rutherford went east to look for a president and persuaded Dr. Henry Marshall Tory, a lecturer at McGill university, to take the job.

The University of Alberta, now a multi-million dollar corporation with over 18,000 students, started in 1908 with a staff of four professors. In the early years, it could be moved in a small pick-up truck. In fact, it was moved three times in the first four years. The original home of the university was the Duggan Street school, now Queen Alexander elementary school, on 77th Avenue and 106th Street. Four months later, it was moved to Old Scona.

After being located in the new Strathcona College it moved into the first academic building on the present campus, Athabasca Hall, in 1911. Within four years, Pembina and Assiniboia Halls were constructed.

Meanwhile plans for the new Arts building ran into stiff opposition from the faculty and were rejected. A revised plan was drawn and the building opened in 1915.

By then the First World War had erupted and many students left to fight in Europe.

After the war, the university experiences a boom period. Soon, the north and south labs and the old power plant were erected, followed in 1921 by the Medical Arts building (now the Dentistry and Pharmacy building.)

During most of his term, Tory was involved in the establishment of a national research council.

Initially his work with the council was part-time but when it became an institution in 1928, Tory gave up one presidency for another.

1928 1936

Tory was replaced by Dr. R.C. Wallace, a Scot who had been a professor in Manitoba.

"Wallace had high hopes for the university," says Johns. "Of course, everybody had them in 1928 as the world was spinning off in orbit." When the stockmarket crashed it dealt a serious blow to the university's expansion.

"It was the darkest days of the university. Wallace saw his budget reduced and enrolment fall." He left in 1936 to become principle of Queen's University in Kingston, Ont.

After years of filling in for Tory as acting president, Dr. Kerr finally accepted the president's job in 1936.

"Kerr had been running the place for years and was doing a helluva job," says Johns.

"Kerr did a good job. He was just coming out of the depression with the effects still lingering on. During that time, there had been no promotions and the university wasn't prepared for an increase in enrollment."

"They had to pay young professors a lot of money to get them here. Kerr hired me for \$2,000. Even then, full-time profs were paid only \$6,000."

1942

But by 1942, "the greatest tragedy" in the university history took place. It led to the resignation of Kerr and a full-scale review of the University.

It all started innocuously enough when a Senate Committee recommended that Alberta premier William Aberhart be granted an honorary degree. In a surprise move, the Senate rejected the recommendation by a majority of one vote.

"By them, some of Aberhart's friends had bought him a gown and so on and then the Senate



Campus 1957



Freshman Initiation—1913

Alberta Registration Expected to Exceed ALL Records

With the enrollment of special and graduate and special students on October 15, registration will be complete. According to present figures an all time high is to be expected. Total at time of printing was 1,994.

Judging from last year's records, graduate and special registration should be approximately 125. This will swell the final total to an imposing 2,120, showing a substantial increase over last year's 2,069.

Conspicuous increases occurred in the faculties of

Agriculture, Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, and School of Nursing. Registration in Arts fell from 553 to 506. Enrollment in other faculties changed very little.

Present registration stands at the following figures: Arts 506, Pharmacy 60, Household Economics 91, Commerce 88, Applied Science, 257, Medicine 221, Dentistry 76, Law 57, Nursing (B.Sc. course) 28, (Diploma course) 91, Agriculture 89, School of Education 24.

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