

**THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO:
A SKETCH**

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The University of Chicago: A Sketch by Nott Flint

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* CHICAGO



COBB LECTURE HALL

The University of Chicago

A Sketch

BY

NOTT FLINT, '98



CHICAGO
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HISTORICAL STATEMENT

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IN 1891 a complete prospectus of the University of Chicago, worked out in detail, was sent to more than fifty American colleges and universities for criticism. When it was learned that the proposed university had not yet broken ground, a ripple of smiles spread over the educational world. These plans, however, were as far as possible from being visionary; they were previsionary—products of the thought of men who were building for a large future, and who wished the foundations laid broad and deep.

This policy of forethoughtfulness is perhaps more characteristic of the University of Chicago than any other one thing. It is evident everywhere—in plans for building, in the relations of the University with other schools and colleges, in the arrangement of curricula, in the guidance of social tendencies—wherever one chooses to look. And not only in the present, but from the beginning this method has prevailed in shaping the University. When, in 1886, the old University of Chicago, founded by Stephen A. Douglas and a number of others, passed out of existence, and a successor was discussed, Chicago was decided upon as the site, not merely for traditional reasons, but because everything pointed to the future of this city as most suitable for the future of the proposed institution. The old University had been a protégé of the Baptist denomination, and a college rather than a university. But from the first the new one, while cherishing the memory of the old, was to be a very university both in the freedom of its thought and in its scope. That it should be non-sectarian was laid down in the charter; and the same

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instrument provided that no religious test should ever be applied to faculty or student.

Mr. Rockefeller, though from the first he has given, not only his wealth, but his deepest consideration and interest, to the University, refused to let his name be made a part of the title. He wished to be a friend to the institution and a fellow-worker with others for its welfare. He wanted it to stand, not as a monument to himself or to any other man, but solid in its own strength and devotion to the truth. Only so could it be free to perform the great services which a university should render. And thus all who have put the work of their brains into the upbuilding of the institution have looked far beyond their own lifetime, beyond the Chicago of today and the interests of the Middle West, and, undaunted by the crudities of the present, have ceaselessly planned for a great future.

The first formal bulletins concerning the new University were published in 1891. At this time the assets included \$600,000 from Mr. Rockefeller; \$400,000 raised by general subscription; a gift of land—ten acres—from Mr. Marshall Field; \$1,000,000 from Mr. Rockefeller; property and endowment of Union Theological Seminary; in all, about \$3,000,000.

It was on October 1, 1892, that the University opened its doors to students. There were nearly six hundred of them, more than half coming for graduate study, and they represented, besides all the New England states, twenty-seven others, and twelve foreign countries. Only four buildings were on the grounds—three dormitories for men and a lecture-hall. The students had to pass under scaffolding and among piles of building materials in going to their work. The Commons were situated in a basement, to be reached by dark passages hissing with steam pipes; but everyone was superbly



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