

# 1870s

## “We Are Not Typical—of Each Other, or of Anything Else”: Fifteen Decades of Student Life at the University of Illinois

“There is, thank God, no such thing as an ‘Illinois student.’ We are so various that not even the most misty-eyed alumni could confuse us. We are not typical—of each other, or of anything else. This University is too big, and we are too many, for it to be possible that a product could be turned out here . . . And that is not a weakness but a strength.”

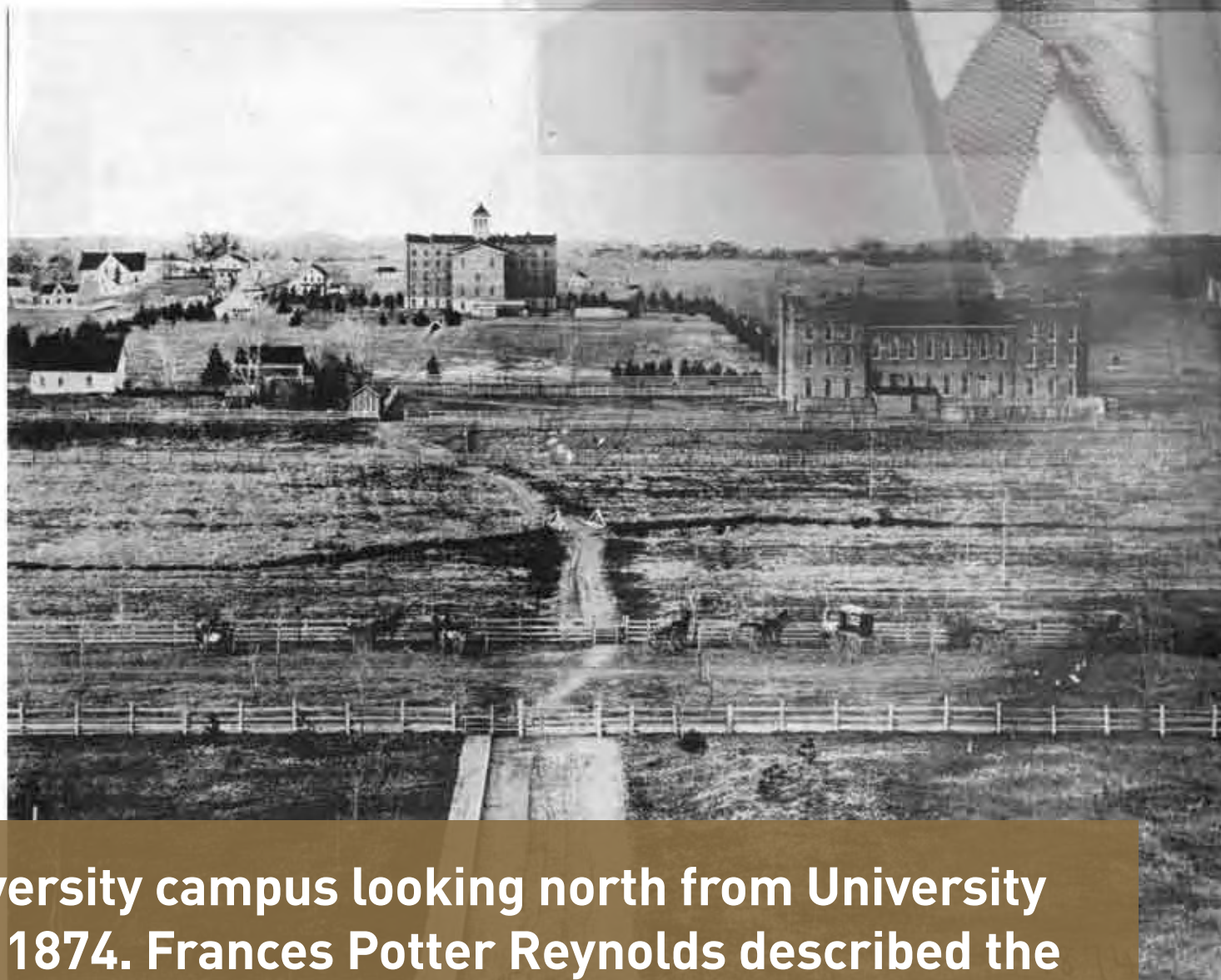
Roger Ebert, 1964

This exhibit, sponsored by the Student Life and Culture Program of the University of Illinois Archives, offers a glimpse of student life in the fifteen decades of the University’s existence. Two or three students per decade are profiled. Some are celebrities with instantly recognizable names but most lived their fascinating lives well outside of the limelight. Please take your time exploring the exhibit: If you look carefully enough, you might just find a student or two who reminds you of the person in the mirror.

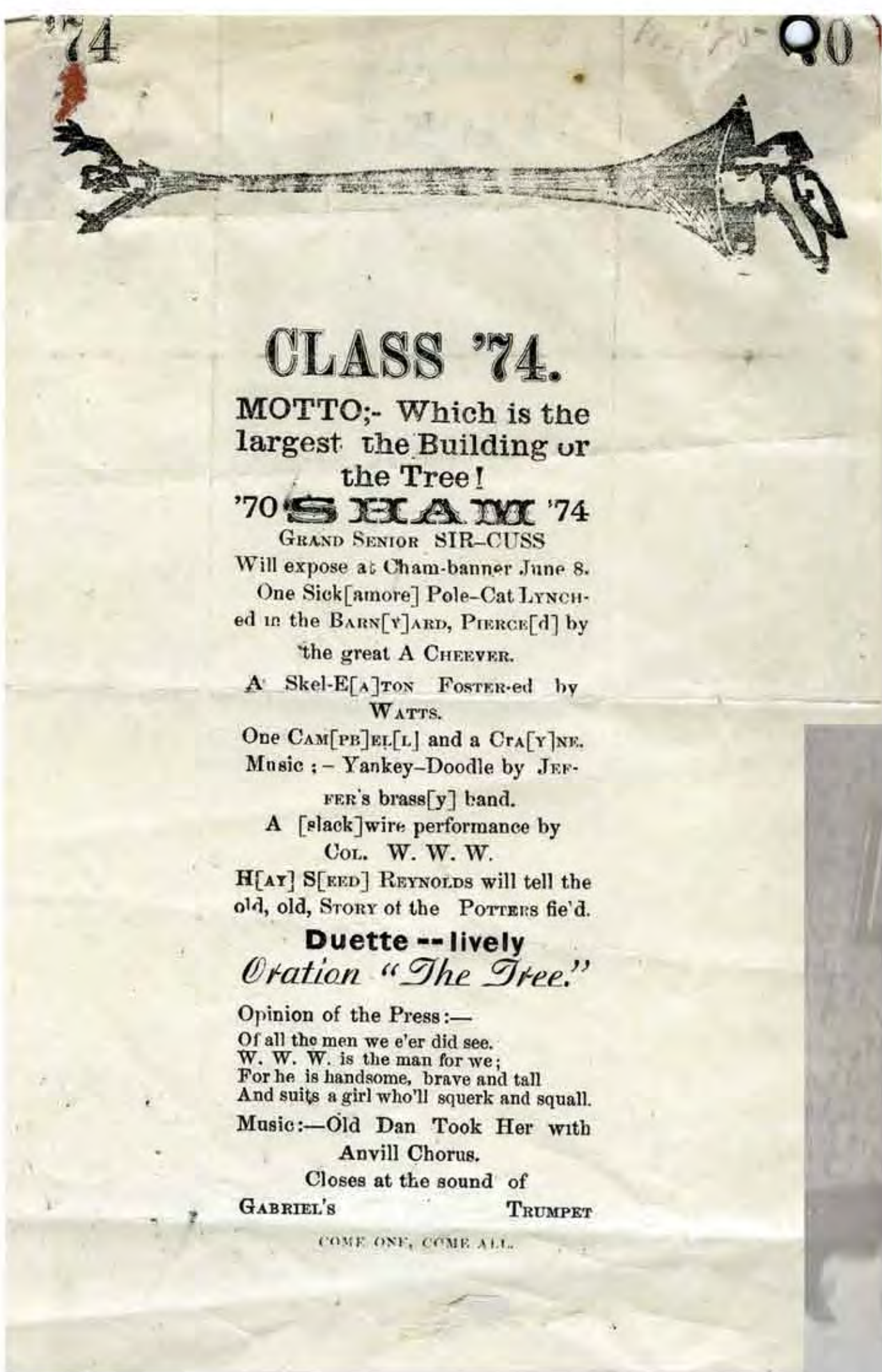
The 15-year-old **James Newton Matthews**, ‘72, the first student to enroll at the Illinois Industrial University, had the soul of a poet in an age of iron and grit. Active in campus affairs, Matthews was a member of the Philomathean literary society and the Delta Tau Delta fraternity. After graduating from the University in June 1872, he worked as a journalist for a time before following in his father’s footsteps and becoming a country doctor. He gained a measure of fame for his volumes of poetry and was christened the “Poet of the Prairies.” He died in 1910 of “heart weakness.” The James Newton Matthews Scholarship Program was named in his honor.

**Frances Adelia Potter Reynolds** ‘74, one of the first women graduates of the University, arrived on the University campus in 1868 and was struck by the sight—and not in a good way. “It was as desolate a place as it is possible to imagine,” she later wrote. Reynolds nonetheless enrolled at the University and she never regretted it. She was an editor of the fledgling *Illini* (later re-named the *Daily Illini*) and a co-founder of the Alethenai literary society. On June 10, 1874, she married her classmate and fellow *Illini* editor Henry Reynolds in the parlor of the newly built University Hall; Regent Gregory officiated at the ceremony. Mrs. Reynolds would go on to have a prolific career as a writer, publishing numerous stories, poems, and articles mostly on religious and educational themes. She died in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1919.

James Newton Matthews, 1872. Matthews and two other Philomatheans secretly founded a chapter of Delta Tau Delta on campus, defying the wishes of Regent Gregory, who considered fraternities to be undemocratic. Students divided into “pro” and “anti” Delt factions.



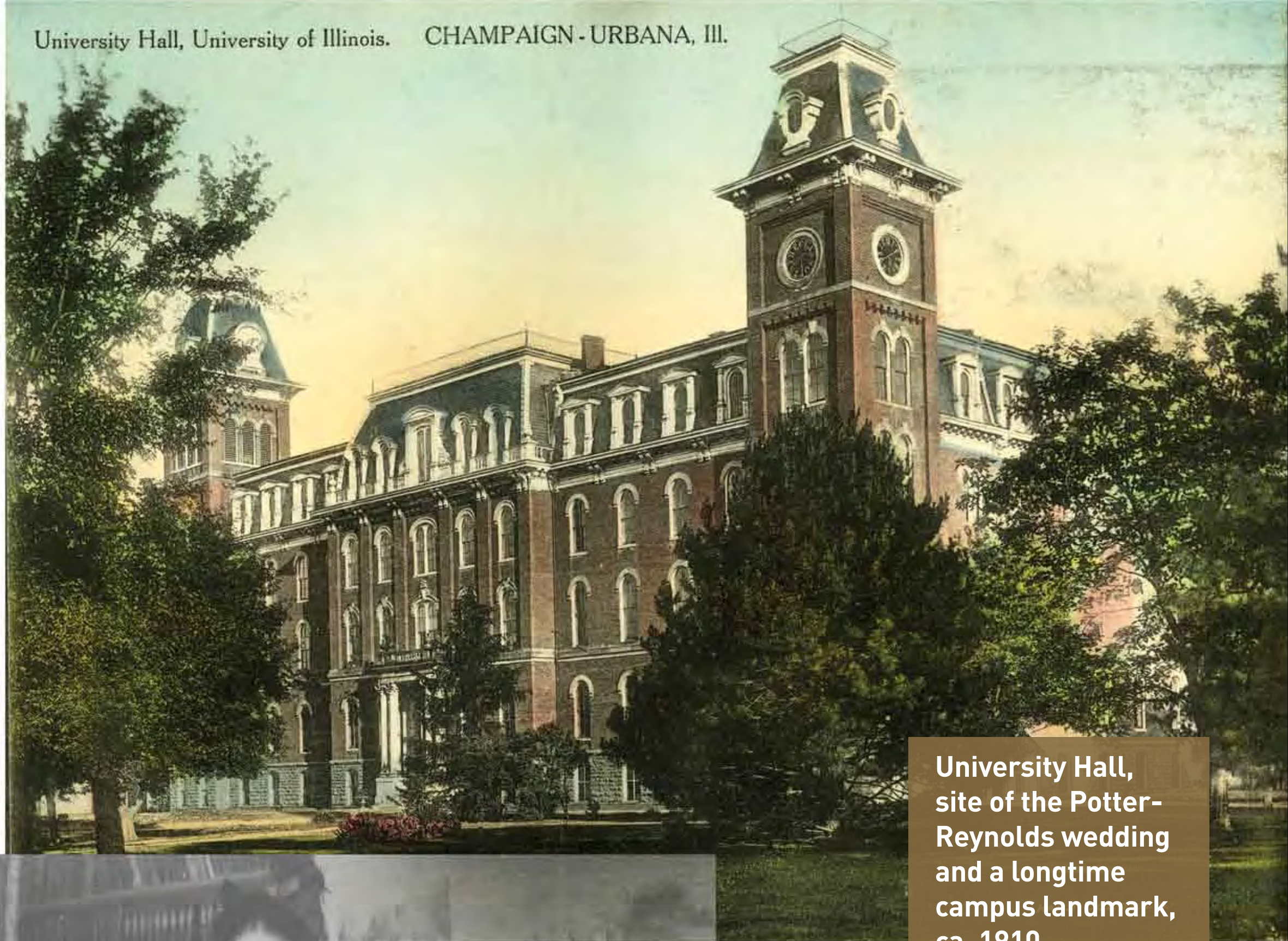
The University campus looking north from University Hall, ca. 1874. Frances Potter Reynolds described the University Building (the square building with the cupola seen in the distance)—better known by the nickname “the Elephant”—as “a large, plain, red brick five-story structure set down flat in the black Illinois mud, with not a tree or shrub, a spear of grass or a fence.”



Broadside mocking the Class of 1874. Apparently written by an underclassman, this broadside foreshadowed future class rivalries pitting seniors against juniors and sophomores against freshmen. In the 1880s and 1890s freshmen dances were often disrupted by sophomores using their bare fists and a homemade form of tear gas.

**MARRIED.**  
At the Illinois Industrial University, June 10th, 1874, by Dr. J. M. Gregory, Mrs. Henry S. Reynolds and Miss F. Adelia Potter, both of Champaign county.  
The above took place in the University parlor, immediately after the commencement exercises. The *ILLINI* joins in the rejoicing over the union of two of its editors, “H. S. R.” and “Del.” May “Early Spring Flowers” bloom perpetually for them, and “May Day” last all the year. “Things Have Turned Round.”

Notice of the Potter-Reynolds marriage, *Illini*, June 1, 1874



University Hall, site of the Potter-Reynolds wedding and a longtime campus landmark, ca. 1910



Frances Potter Reynolds, ca. 1880



Alethenai Society, with the first women students at the University, 1871. In 1870 the Board of Trustees voted to admit women in a 5-4 vote.

# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS ARCHIVES

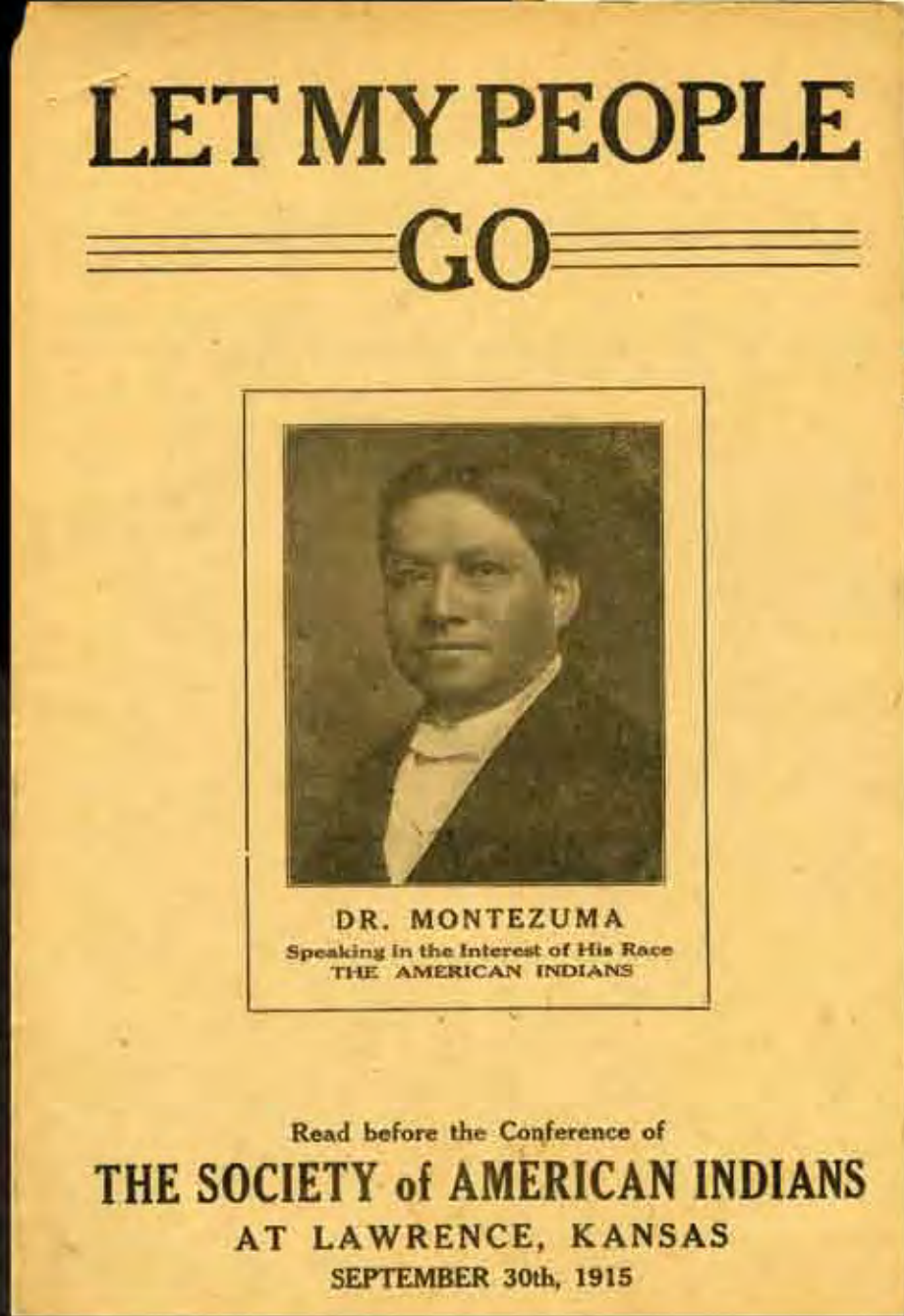
# 1880s

**Carlos Montezuma**, ‘84, the first Native American graduate of the University, was 5 years old when he was captured by Pima raiders in 1871 and sold to Carlo Gentile, an Italian photographer. After wandering the country with Gentile, Montezuma (he was known as Wassaja to his native people) eventually ended up in Urbana where he enrolled at the University in 1880. A popular student, he honed his oratorical abilities as a member of the Adelphe Society and capped his University career by being elected class president. Montezuma went on to become a medical doctor and a tireless advocate for Native American rights. He died in 1923 on the reservation of his people, the Yavapai. “Monte was worn out in the labor of love for his people,” a classmate declared.

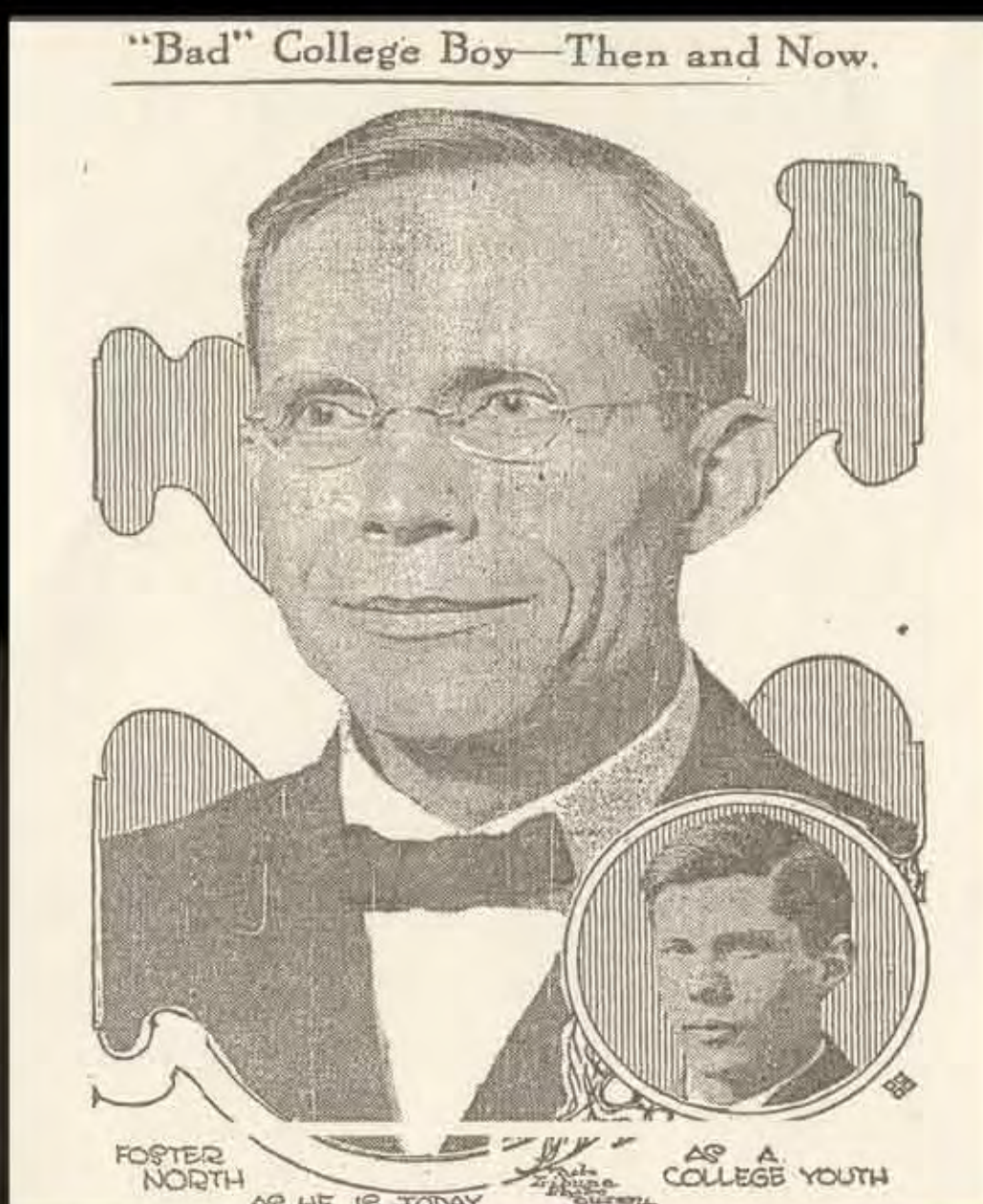
**Foster North**, ‘85, refused to attend compulsory chapel services and as a result was suspended by Regent Selim Peabody only six weeks before he was due to graduate. A fervent believer in the separation of church and state, North brought suit against the University in 1890 alleging the infringement of his constitutional rights; the Illinois Supreme Court ultimately ruled against him. A few years later, compulsory chapel ended at the University, but North wouldn’t receive his diploma until 1914. North, however, objected to the fact that the 1914 Commencement ceremony included a benediction by a Catholic priest so he mailed his diploma back to UI President Edmund James. “Once a graduate, always a graduate,” James responded in the press.

A young Montezuma, ca. 1885

“Let My People Go,” Montezuma printed speech assailing the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1915



Chicago Tribune photos of North, then (1880s) and now (1910s), 1914



Senior class outing (Montezuma in canoe at far right), 1884



Class of 1884 ribbon



Chapel service, 1878. Regents Gregory and Peabody strongly believed in the efficacy of religious instruction and so required students to attend daily chapel services.

North never forgave Selim Peabody (pictured) for suspending him as this extract from a 1929 letter of his to the Alumni Association makes clear:

“When the next directory after this is published I will have probably ‘passed in’ and then you may give my permanent address as the hottest spot in hell and record that I am looking up at the battlements of the Presbyterian heaven looking at old Peabody standing there, golden hoop in hand, smiling at me and shouting ‘I told you so’ and that I am yelling back over the agonizing screams of my fellows that ‘I would rather be in hell than in heaven associating with a god who damned all because Adam ate an apple . . .”





## 1890s

Thomas Arkle Clark, ca. 1890



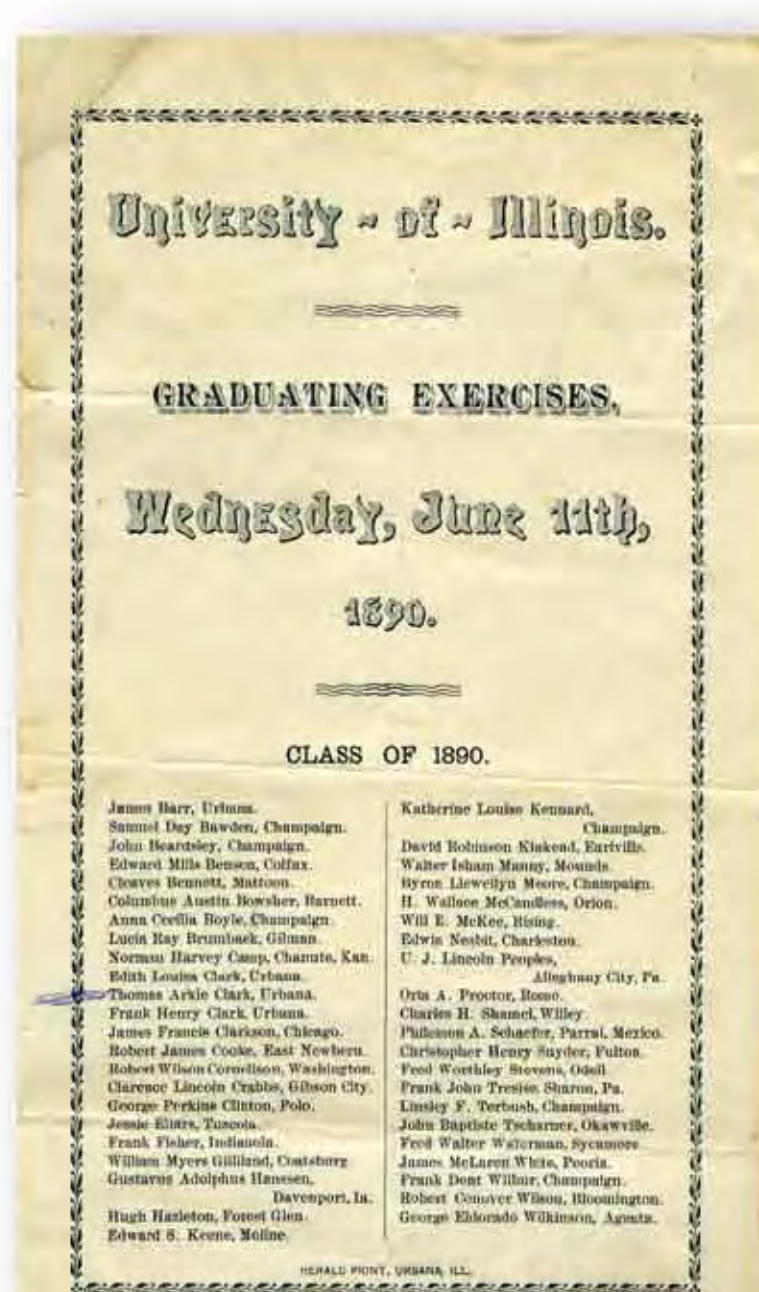
Clark and other students in formal dress, ca. 1890

**Thomas Arkle Clark**, '90, escaped a hardscrabble childhood on a central Illinois farm and never looked back. Entering the University at the age of 24, Clark excelled both inside and outside of the classroom. He was editor of the *Illini*, president of the Philomathean Society, and an active student politician. After graduation, Clark embarked upon a lifelong career at the University, first as an English teacher, then as Dean of Undergraduates, and finally as Dean. As Dean, Clark encouraged the growth of fraternities because they were a convenient source of housing and because they helped him enforce discipline. His policies helped make the University (which had banned fraternities and sororities for the first 25 years of its existence) the Greek organization "capital of the world" by the 1920s. Clark died in 1932 of an intestinal tumor.

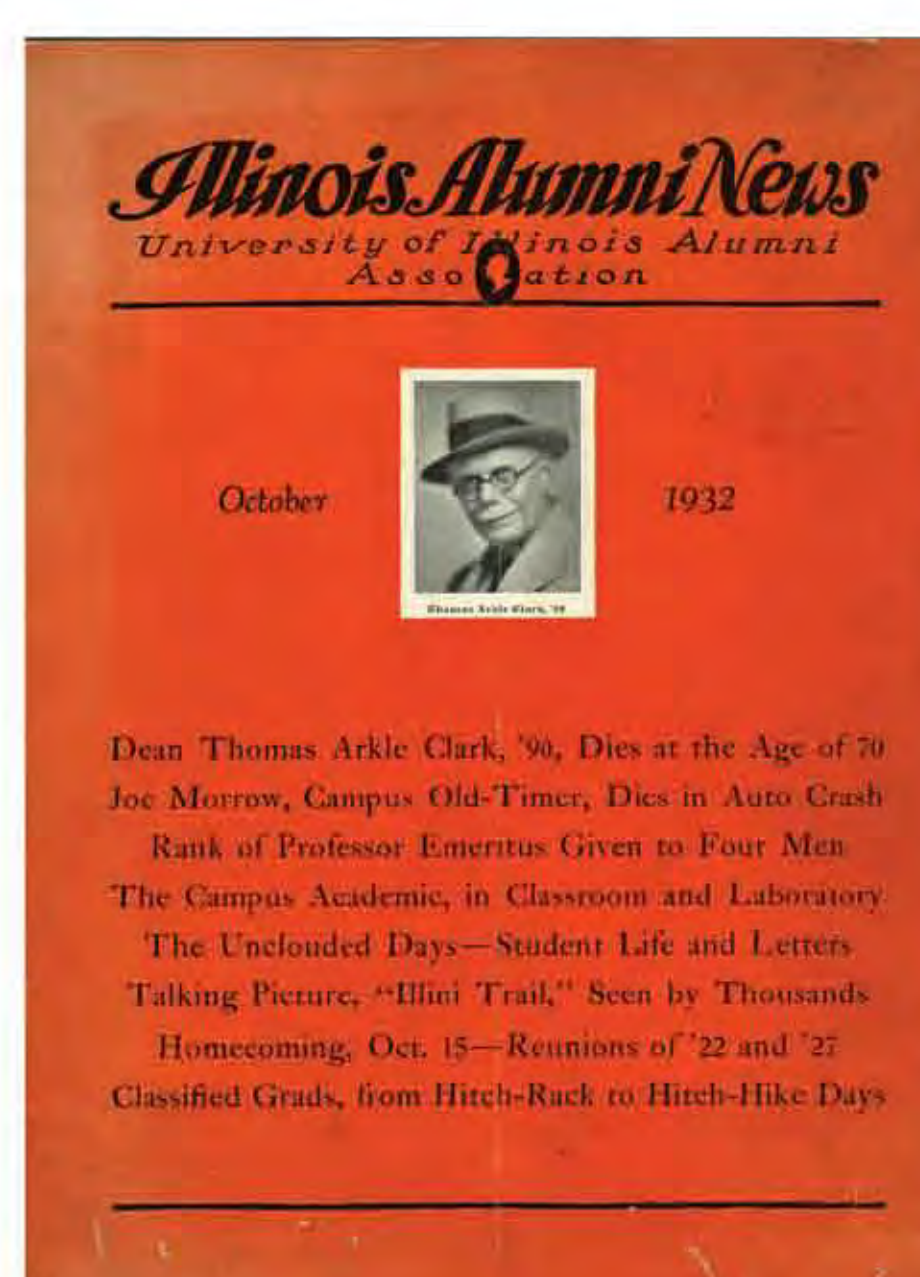
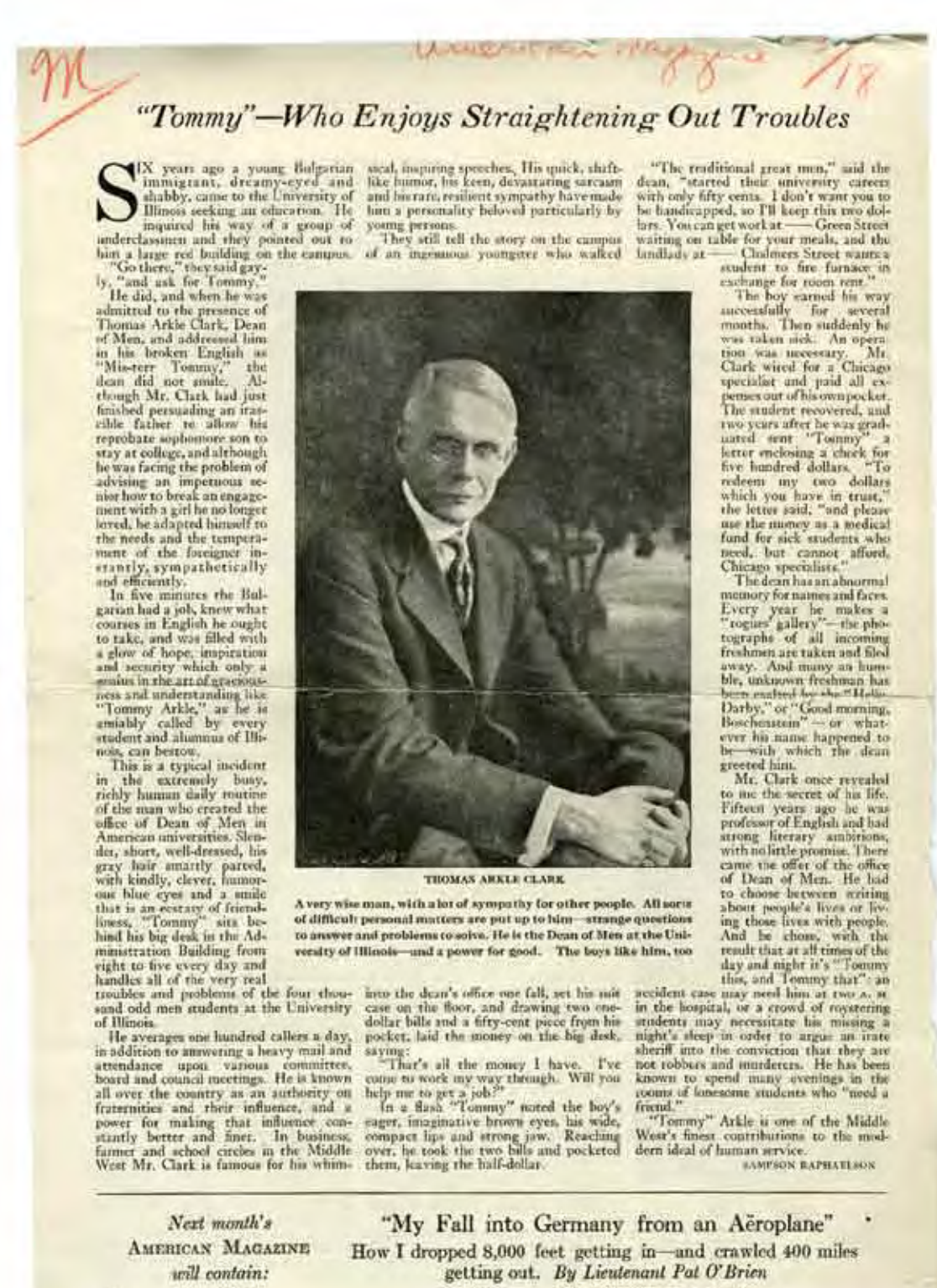
Clark was editor-in-chief of the 1890 *Sophograph*, a yearbook published by the sophomore class. This photo from the *Sophograph* (Clark is in the back row wearing a top hat and brandishing a hatchet) proves that even in the 19th century students weren't averse to having fun.



Satisfaction Tormented as depicted.



Commencement program, 1890

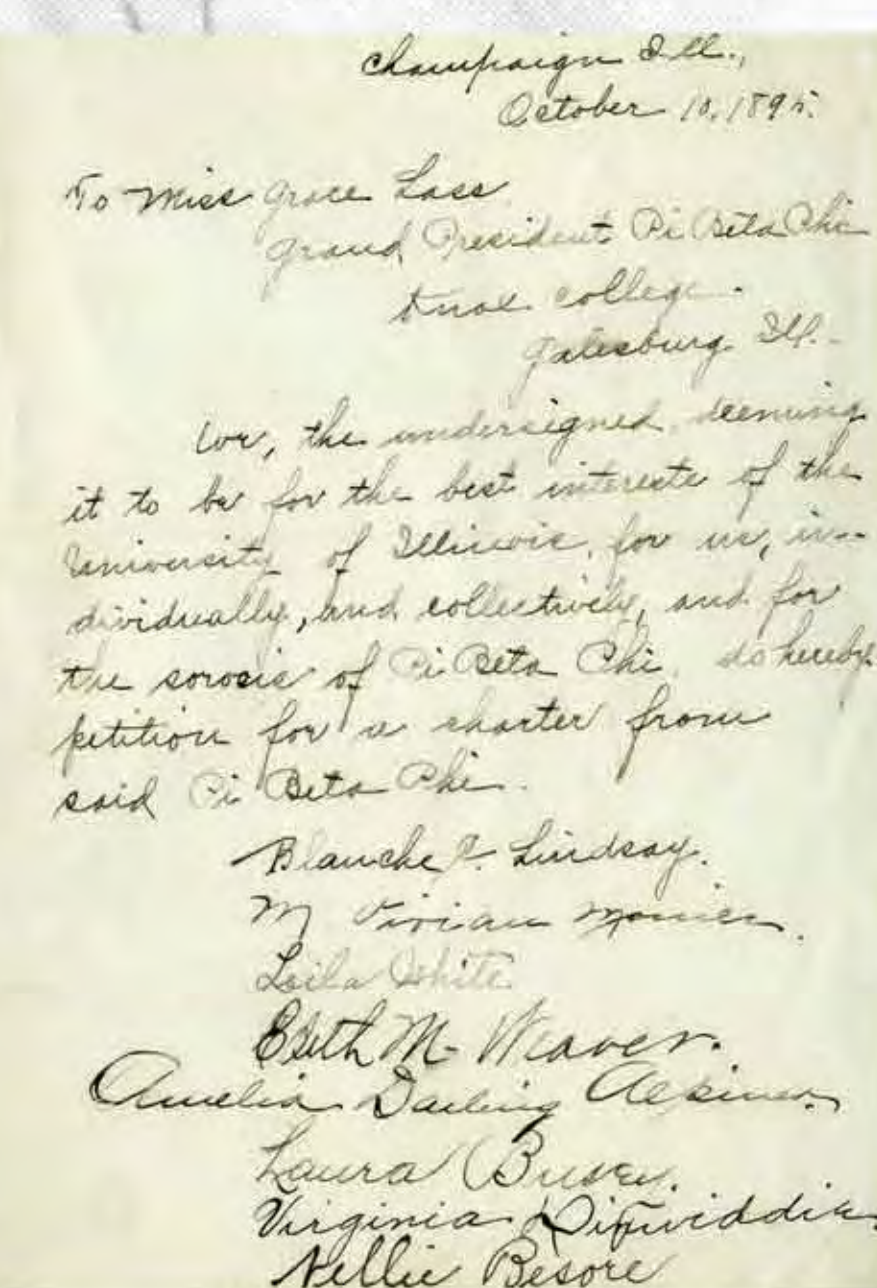
The October 1932 issue of *Illinois Alumni News* contained a tribute to the recently deceased Clark.Profile of Clark written by Samson Raphaelson, "Tommy"—Who Enjoys Straightening Out Troubles," *The American Magazine*, May 1918

**Amelia Alpiner Stern**, '96, left an enduring imprint on the University as both a student and an alumna. The Kankakee native took an active part in student affairs: she was a member of the *Illini*, the Alethean Society, and the Dramatic Club. She also was a founding member of the Illinois Zeta chapter of the Pi Beta Phi sorority—the second sorority to be installed on the campus after Kappa Alpha Theta. (She told a correspondent that "we will probably demand our rights" if the University authorities failed to grant the sorority's petition.) As an alumna, Stern continued her pioneering ways: in 1923 she organized the University of Illinois Mothers Association and became its first president. Forty years later the Mothers Association created a scholarship in her honor. She died in 1969.

Amelia Alpiner Stern and her sisters in the Pi Beta Phi sorority, 1896. She is in the back row, center.

The *Illini* staff, 1896. Stern's forceful personality is evident in this photo: she stands in the center, hands firmly planted on hips.

The 89-year-old Stern at a Mothers Association ceremony honoring her, 1963



Petition for charter for Pi Beta Phi chapter on UI campus, signed by Stern and others, 1895

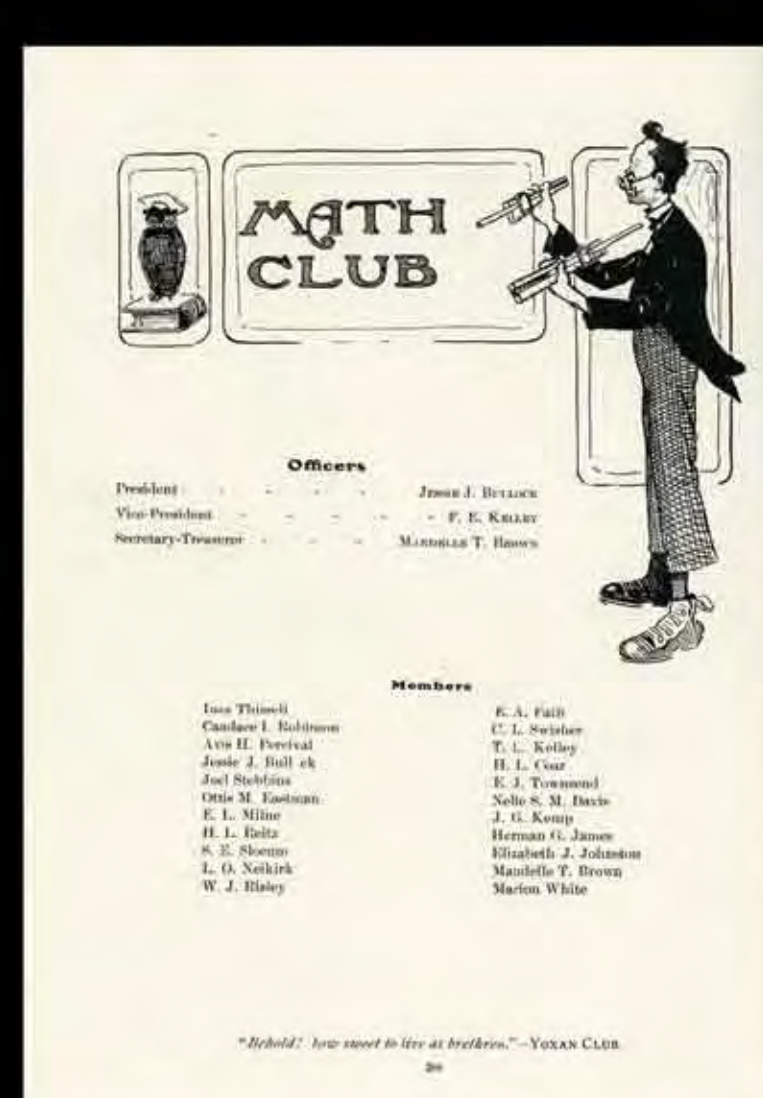
## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS ARCHIVES

## 1900s

**William Walter Smith**, '00, '07, '13, the first African-American graduate of the University, struggled to find his way in a society scarred by racism. The son of a slave who became a wealthy central Illinois farmer, Smith received three degrees from the University: an A.B. in 1900, a B.S. in 1907, and a professional degree in Civil Engineering in 1913. Smith was active in campus affairs during his first stint at the University, belonging to the football team, the Philomathean Society and the Republican Club. As editor-in-chief of the *Illini* in 1899-1900, he remade the weekly into a modern broadsheet newspaper with a strong editorial voice and a thrice-a-week publication schedule. Outside of the University Smith had a varied career: at one time or another he was a Latin instructor, the city engineer for Farmer City, a special field agent for the Association of American Portland Cement Manufacturers, an engineer for Armour & Company based in Argentina, and a salesman of structural steel products in Chile. In 1922 he changed his name to Walter Smith Oglesby. Smith died sometime before 1938; the exact date is not known.

**Maudelle Brown Bousfield**, '06, the first African-American woman graduate of the University, excelled in mathematics but she wanted to be an astronomer. However, an astronomy professor advised her not to make this career choice, stating that her chance of landing a job in the astronomy field was low because of her gender and her race. Bousfield followed the professor's advice and instead became a mathematics teacher. She taught in East St. Louis, Baltimore, and St. Louis before coming to Chicago where she spent 37 years as a teacher and principal. (She was the first African-American principal of a Chicago public school.) Bousfield's stellar academic record received belated recognition in 1965 when she was elected an honorary member of the University of Illinois chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. She died in 1971. The University named Bousfield Hall in her honor.

William Walter Smith, ca. 1900

The *Illini* staff (from 1901 *Illio*). Smith is in the center of the back row.Maudelle Brown Bousfield photo from the 1907 *Illio*. In the *Illio* her first name is misspelled as "Mandelle."1907 *Illio*. Maudelle Brown Bousfield was elected secretary of the Mathematical Club in March 1906.

Just before her induction into Phi Beta Kappa, Mrs. Maudelle Brown Bousfield '06 and daughter visit with two members of the University faculty. From left are Dr. Henning Larsen, Mrs. Bousfield, Mrs. W. Leonard Evans Jr. of Chicago, whose husband was graduated here in 1935; and Dean Allen S. Weller.

59 Years Later  
Mrs. Bousfield Is Phi Beta Kappa

Illinois Alumni News article showing Bousfield at Phi Beta Kappa ceremony, 1965



Photo looking northwest from University Hall toward corner of Wright and Green Streets, ca. 1890. The diagonal pathway marks the so-called "Illini Trail," a shortcut taken by students traveling between downtown Champaign and the UI campus. In 1902 William Walter Smith wrote to President Andrew Driaper proposing the creation of a "cooperative" book store near campus. "At Illinois the nearest store is more than a mile away and street car service is not the best," Smith stated. Within a few years such a bookstore would appear on the corner of Wright and Green and Green Street would never be the same.



Students dancing in Women's Gymnasium, ca. 1910. To earn extra money, Bousfield played the piano at dances like the one depicted in this photograph. She and the four other African-American students then at the University didn't have many recreational options themselves. "On Sunday the five of us would go to one of the two black churches in Champaign and sit in the back, listen to the music and watch the services," she recalled in 1970. "There wasn't anything else to do."