

“People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestry.”

Edmund Burke

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The University of Michigan
A Photographic Saga



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Dedication

To all of those who worked so hard in years past to build one of the world's great universities.

To Jim, whose devotion, dedication, and loyalty to the University of Michigan are unsurpassed.

To the future Michigan family, with the hope that they will always persevere in sustaining the University of Michigan as "The Leaders and Best."

Preface

A decade from now, in 2017, the University of Michigan will celebrate 200 years of leadership in higher education through education, scholarship, and service. This photographic history was created to both document and honor the remarkable achievements of the University during its first two centuries.

Although images of a university usually depict campus buildings or historical events, universities are profoundly human endeavors. Great achievements happen because talented and dedicated faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends make them happen.

This pictorial essay is intended to introduce the people and events that have contributed so much to the University's history. It tells this history as a saga, bringing together images with the words of members of the Michigan family who participated directly in the creation and building of this great institution.

This effort draws heavily from the historical archives of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan publications such as the *Michigan Alumnus* magazine, the *University of Michigan: An Encyclopedic Survey*, and student publications including the *Michigan Technic* and the *Michiganensian* yearbook. Books and articles written by Michigan faculty, students, and alumni were also of great value. In particular, the letters, diaries, and various papers of faculty and students provided a glimpse of what life was like in the early years of the University.

The story of the Michigan saga could not have been told without the visual images and photographs archived by the Bentley Historical Library and included in various Michigan publications. A more complete description of these resource materials is provided in the acknowledgements section at the end of this book.

Of particular value in reconstructing the early history and evolution of the Michigan campus was *Mort's Map*, a work created by Myron Mortensen, an engineer in the Plant Department until 1954 when he became Chief Draftsman. The map provides the footprint of all of the buildings that existed on the campus from the 1840s through the 1960s. Because of the value of this document for understanding the campus, we have provided a digital version of Mort's Map, along with linkages to the histories of Michigan's many buildings, at the website: <http://umhistory.org>

It is the author's hope that this pictorial history will be of interest to those who have benefited from the University of Michigan in the past. The book is also designed to serve as a resource to guide those who will determine and benefit from its activities in the future. Most significantly, this photographic saga provides vivid evidence of the profound impact that the University of Michigan has had on the evolution of higher education in America and hence upon its state, the nation, and the world during the first two centuries of its long and distinguished history.

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Forward

The challenge of capturing the rich history of a complex, consequential, and enduring institution such as the University of Michigan is considerable indeed. In part this has to do with the profoundly public character of the university. For example, contrast the manner in which distinguished private universities, such as Yale or Harvard, embrace their history and tradition. The ancient ivy-covered buildings, the statues, plaques, and monuments attesting to important people and events of the past, all convey a sense that these institutions have evolved slowly over the centuries in careful and methodical ways to achieve their present forms.

In contrast, a visit to the campus of one of our great state universities conveys more of a sense of dynamism and impermanence. Most of the buildings look new, even hastily constructed in order to accommodate rapid growth. The icons of the public university tend to be their football stadiums or the smokestacks of their central power plants rather than their ivy-covered buildings or monuments. In talking with campus leaders at public universities, one gets little sense that the history of these institutions is valued or recognized. The consequence is that the public university evolves through geological layers, each generation paving over or obliterating the artifacts and achievements of earlier students and faculty with a new layer of structures, programs, and practices.

Yet one might well make the case that the University of Michigan's history is perhaps as important as that of any institution in American higher education. It can be argued that it was in the Midwest, in towns such as Ann Arbor and Madison, that the early paradigm for the true public university in America first evolved, a paradigm capable of responding to the needs of a rapidly changing nation in the 19th Century, a paradigm that still dominates higher education today. In many ways, the University of Michigan has been throughout its history the flagship of public higher education in America.

One might even claim that the University of Michigan was not only the first truly public university in America and one of its first land-grant universities, but also possibly even its first true university, at least in the sense that we would understand it today. To be sure, the colonial colleges such as Harvard and Yale were established much earlier by the states (or colonies), as were several institutions in the south such as the Universities of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. But all were governed by clergymen, with the mission of preparing young men for leadership in church or state. The University of Michigan, predating Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia by two years, was firmly established as a *public university* exempt from religious affiliation. Michigan's status as a *land-grant university*, provided through Congressional action of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, predates the Land-Grant Acts establishing the great state universities (e.g., the Morrill Act of 1862) by almost half a century. And Henry Tappan's vision of Michigan as a true *university*, stressing scholarship and scientific research along with instruction, was proposed decades before other early American universities such as Cornell University (founded by Andrew D. White, one of Tappan's faculty members at Michigan) and Johns Hopkins University.

From its founding, Michigan has always been identified with the most progressive forces in American higher education. The early colonial colleges served the aristocracy of colonial society, stressing moral development over a liberal education. In this respect, they emulated the English public schools, which were based on a classical curriculum in subjects such as Greek, Latin, and rhetoric. In contrast, Michigan blended the classical curriculum with the European model that stressed faculty involvement in research and dedication to the preparation of future scholars. Michigan hired as its first professors not classicists but a zoologist and a geologist. Unlike other institutions of the time, Michigan added instruction in the sciences to the humanistic curriculum, creating a hybrid that drew on the best of both a "liberal" and a "utilitarian" education. As historian Frederick Rudolph suggests, it was through the leadership of the University of Michigan after the Civil War, joined by the University of Minnesota and the University of Wisconsin, that the state universities in the Midwest and West would evolve into the inevitable and necessary expression of a democratic society (Rudolph, p. 277). "Frontier democracy and materialism combined to create a new type of institution, capable of serving all of the people of a rapidly changing America through education, research, and public service." As Rudolph notes, these institutions attempted to "marry the practical and the theoretical, attempting to attract farm boys to their classrooms and scholars to their faculties" (Rudolph, p. 269).

Michigan was the first university in the West to pursue professional education, establishing its medical school in 1850, engineering courses in 1854, and a law school in 1859. The university was among the first to introduce instruction in fields as diverse as zoology and botany, modern languages, modern history, American literature, pharmacy, dentistry, speech, journalism, teacher education, forestry, bacteriology, naval architecture, aeronautical engineering, computer engineering, and nuclear engineering. Throughout its early years, Michigan was the site of many other firsts in higher education. It provided leadership in scientific research by building one of the first university observatories in the world in 1854, followed in 1856 by the nation's first chemistry laboratory building. In 1869 it opened the first university-owned hospital, which today has evolved into one of the nation's largest university medical centers. It continued as a source of major paradigm shifts in higher education in the 20th century. It created the first aeronautical engineering program in 1913 and then followed soon after WWII with the first nuclear engineering (1952) and computer engineering (1955) programs. The formation of the Survey Research Center and associated Institute of Social Research in the 1950s stimulated the quantitative approach that underpins today's social sciences. Michigan was a pioneer in atomic energy, with the first nuclear reactor on a university campus, and then later developed time-sharing computing in the 1960s. In the 1980s it played a leadership role in building and managing the Internet, the electronic superhighway that is now revolutionizing our society.

Throughout its history, the University of Michigan has also been one of the nation's largest universities, vying with the largest

private universities such as Harvard and Columbia during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and then holding this position of national leadership until the emergence of the statewide public university systems (e.g., the University of California and the University of Texas) in the post-WWII years. It continues to benefit from one of the largest alumni bodies in higher education, with almost 500,000 living alumni. The university's influence on the nation has been profound through the achievements of its graduates, who are well represented in leadership roles in both the public and private sector and in learned professions such as law, medicine, and engineering. Today Michigan sends more of its graduates into professional study in fields such as law, medicine, engineering, and business than any other university in the nation.

The activism of Michigan students has often stimulated change in our society, from the teach-ins against the Vietnam War in the 1960s to Earth Day in the 1970s to the Michigan Mandate in the 1980s. In a similar fashion, Michigan played a leadership role in public service, from John Kennedy's announcement of the Peace Corps on the steps of the Michigan Union in 1960 to the AmeriCorps in 1994. Its classrooms have often been battlegrounds over what colleges will teach, from challenges to the Great Books canon to more recent confrontations over political correctness. Over a century ago *Harper's Weekly* noted that "the most striking feature of the University of Michigan is the broad and liberal spirit in which it does its work" (Peckham, p. 5). This spirit of democracy and tolerance for diverse views among its students and faculty continues today.

Nothing could be more natural to the University of Michigan than challenging the status quo. Change has always been an important part of the university's tradition. Michigan has long defined the model of the large, comprehensive, public research university, with a serious commitment to scholarship and progress. It has been distinguished by unusual breadth, a rich diversity of academic disciplines, professional schools, social and cultural activities, and intellectual pluralism. The late Clark Kerr, the president of the University of California, once referred to the University of Michigan as "the mother of state universities," noting it was the first to prove that a high-quality education could be delivered at a publicly funded institution of higher learning (Kerr, 1999).

This unrelenting commitment to academic excellence, broad student access, and public service continues today. In virtually all national and international surveys, the university's programs rank among the very best, with most of its schools, colleges, and departments ranking in quality among the top ten nationally and with several regarded as the leading programs in the nation. Other state universities have had far more generous state support than the University of Michigan. Others have had a more favorable geographical location than "good, gray Michigan." But it was Michigan's unusual commitment to provide a college education of the highest possible quality to an increasingly diverse society—regardless of state support, policy, or politics—that might be viewed as one of the university's most important characteristics. The rapid expansion and growth of the nation during the 19th and 20th centuries demanded colleges and universities capable

of serving all of its population rather than simply the elite as the key to a democratic society. Here Michigan led the way in both its commitment to wide access and equality and in the leadership it provided for higher education in America.

So how does one capture the history of such a remarkable institution? To be sure, there are numerous scholarly tomes and popular histories of the University of Michigan, its leaders, and its programs. There is even a multiple-volume University of Michigan Historical Encyclopedia and an entire library (the Bentley Historical Library) dedicated to this effort. Yet this book differs from these earlier efforts by attempting a more visual and emotional approach to documenting the places, the people, and the events that have shaped and defined the university over almost two centuries. It departs from the usual narrative form of a history to instead build through images, quotes, and brief descriptions a series of stories about the University of Michigan, much as one might convey a mythology or saga from one generation to the next.

Burton R. Clark, a noted sociologist and scholar of higher education, has defined the concept of organizational or "institutional saga" to refer to those long-standing characteristics that determine the distinctiveness of a college or university. "The institutional saga is a historically based, somewhat embellished understanding of a unique organizational development. Colleges are prone to a remembrance of things past and a symbolism of uniqueness. The more special the history or the more forceful the claim to a place in history, the more intensively cultivated are the ways of sharing memory and symbolizing the institution." He further suggests, "An institutional saga may be found in many forms, through mottoes, traditions, and ethos. It might consist of long-standing practices or unique roles played by an institution, or even in the images held in the minds (and hearts) of students, faculty, and alumni. Sagas can provide a sense of romance and even mystery that turn a cold organization into a beloved social institution, capturing the allegiance of its members and even defining the identity of its communities" (Clark, p. 235).

The appearance of a distinct institution saga involves many elements—visionary leadership, strong faculty and student cultures, unique programs, ideologies, and of course, the time to accumulate the events, achievements, legends, and mythology that characterize long-standing institutions. From this perspective, the saga of the University of Michigan is remarkable indeed. And it just is such a historical saga that this pictorial history attempts to capture and convey.

James J. Duderstadt

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