

The University of Michigan Seals & The Controversy Over the Founding Date

(These words have been taken directly from an article in the *Michigan Alumnus* of March 23, 1929, p. 463. Written by Shelby B. Schurtz '08, '10)

After much frustration about the neglect of preserving the history of the University of Michigan, the Alumni Association established an Alumni Committee on History and Tradition. One of their projects was to establish the founding date of the University. After three years of intensive study, the committee determined that the universal custom of universities was to signify their founding date by their corporate seals and determined further that the erroneous common understanding was that Michigan was founded in 1837. In investigating the history and traditions of Michigan, the committee discovered the University was founded on August 26, 1817. As a result, the committee asked the Board of Regents to require the use of the correct date, August 26, 1817, in all seals, diplomas, catalogues and other literature issued by the University or its authority hereafter.

The University has had several seals. Its first seal, commonly called the “Epistemia” seal, was adopted September 12, 1817. The Temple of Wisdom Seal—six pillars support a dome—light shines from above on the dome.



On April 5, 1843 the “Minerva” seal was adopted. This seal was used from 1843 to 1896. Minerva is shown pointing a youth to the Temple of Wisdom.

On October 16, 1895, a new seal was adopted by a full vote of the Regents. The Lamp of Knowledge Seal, with a rising sun back of the shield taken from the State of Michigan coat of arms. The “Epistemia” and the “Minerva” seals were fully described. However, the 1895 seal came with no description. It is a fact that there is not a scratch of a pen showing the adoption of 1837 upon the seal of the University, it just “grew up” and made its appearance in 1896 “out of the air!” For the first seventy-eight years of its history the University’s seal was without the date 1837 - the date 1837 is a relatively modern invention. All that the Board of Regents proceedings show upon this subject is that on October 16, 1895, “On motion of Regent Dean, the new seal of the University was adopted by a full vote.” What the new seal was is not shown, which lack of description is in strange contrast with the very full description of the “Epistemia” seal adopted September 12, 1817, and the “Minerva” seal adopted April 5, 1843! If 1837 ever was authorized upon the seal no record of the University shows it!

The University of Michigan Seals & The Controversy Over the Founding Date

The only instance where 1817-1837 was discussed by the Regents was back in the 1850s when the enemies of the University argued that the University had no existence prior to 1837 and therefore could not have title to the land deeded by the Federal Government and the Territory of Michigan to its ancestor of 1817. In 1850 the Board of Regents rushed into court and claimed the University was founded in 1817, and by such claim substantiated by the courts managed to retain the University lands! Indeed, the Supreme Court said: “The present University is the same legal body with the University founded in 1817.”



The University of Michigan from its foundation in 1817 until 1867 was supported entirely from its Federal Land Grant endowment and the fees derived from students. In 1867 the Legislature made its first appropriation for the University. “Obviously then until 1867, the institution was not in any sense a state university—it was still a United States Land Grant University.” It is true that the Michigan idea of education, beginning with the University and stretching down through all the lower grades to the primary school, was the pattern for all the other state universities throughout the West, but this idea dates from the University of Michigan of 1817, and it in turn was borrowed from the German and French systems of education in force in 1817 (Harvard Bulletins in Education, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Number VIII, January, 1923. “University of Michigan: Its Origin and Development” by Richard Rees Price. A.M., published by Harvard University, p. 21).

The Catholepistemiad or University of Michigan of 1817 describes accurately a typical German institution of the day in the quaintly pseudo-classic nomenclature which Jefferson very narrowly failed to saddle upon the entire Old Northwest, and which still remains in such names as Rome, Ithaca, Athens, Sparta, Constantine, etc. No, our idea of a state system of public instruction did not spring into being in 1837, it was embodied in the foundation stature of 1817, and instead of “springing into being” it was borrowed from Germany and France, whereas all the other American institutions of learning up to that time were copied after the English Universities (Shelby B. Schurtz '08, '10, *Michigan Alumnus*, March 23, 1929, p. 463).

References

Russell E. Bidlack, "*The University of Michigan General Library: A history of its beginnings, 1837-1852*," dissertation, University of Michigan, 1954.

Ruth Bordin, *The University of Michigan: A Pictorial History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967).

Mortimer E. Cooley, *Scientific Blacksmith* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1947).

Mortimer Cooley's notes on the History of the College of Engineering from its inception to the 1940s (Cooley Files, Bentley Historical Library).

James J. Duderstadt, *On The Move: A Personal History of the College of Engineering in Modern Times* (Ann Arbor: Millennium Project, The University of Michigan, 2003).

Elizabeth M. Farrand, *History of the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: George Wahr, Register Publishing House, 1885).

Paul E. Lingenfelter, "*The Firing Of Henry Philip Tappan, University Builder*," M.S. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1970.

Burke A. Hinsdale, and Isaac Newton Demmon, *History of the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1906).

Michigan Alumnus, (Ann Arbor: 1894-present).

Michigan Technic (Ann Arbor: 1882-1980s).

Michiganensian (Ann Arbor: 1897-present).

Howard H. Peckham, *The Making of the University of Michigan, 1817-1992*, edited and updated by Margaret L. and Nicholas H. Steneck (Ann Arbor: Bentley Library, 1967, 1994).

Regents' Proceedings (online at www.umich.edu/~bhl/).

Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University - A History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990).

Wilfred B. Shaw, *The University of Michigan* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Howe, 1920; 2d ed., Ann Arbor: George Wahr, 1934).

Wilfred B. Shaw, editor, *The University of Michigan: An Encyclopedic Survey* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1947).

Shirley Smith, *James Angell, An American Influence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954).

Henry P. Tappan, A Discourse delivered by Henry P. Tappan, at Ann Arbor, Michigan, on the Occasion of His Inauguration as Chancellor of the University of Michigan, December 21st, 1852. (Detroit: Advertiser Poser Presses, 1852).

Victor C. Vaughan, *A Doctor's Memories* (The Bobs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1926).

Andrew Dickson White, *Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White* (New York: The Century Company, 1905)

Patricia S. Whitesell, *A Creation of His Own: Tappan's Detroit Observatory* (Ann Arbor: Bentley History Library, 1998).

The Michigan Alumnus

The *Michigan Alumnus* documents the activities of the University, chronicling its progress and serving as a medium for news of alumni activities. The magazine was launched as a private enterprise by Alvick Pearson in 1894. He sold it to the Alumni Association in 1898. The *Michigan Alumnus* was published as a monthly until 1921 when it appeared as a weekly. In 1934 the *Quarterly* was inaugurated, so longer, in-depth, articles could be published. Editors of the early years included Shirley Smith, Wilfred Shaw, and T. Hawley Tapping. Wilfred Shaw's drawings and etchings of Michigan campus scenes and personalities were used in many *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Reviews* and other publications.

The Michiganensian

The first *Michiganensian* was published in April of 1897, the result of a consolidation of *The Palladium*, *The Castalian*, and *Res Gestae*. In 1900 it was suggested that the *Michiganensian* should be given more the character of a yearbook, should be paged and indexed, and made the Michigan reference book of the year, giving the names of the winners of the various University contests, lists of society members, etc. The yearbook became a profusely illustrated book of some five hundred pages bound in durable covers. It included articles and photographs on various aspects of the Schools and Colleges, on the various campus activities, and a section recounting the athletic achievements of Michigan teams, during the year.

The Michigan Technic

The *Michigan Technic* was first published in 1882, although it was initially known as the "*Selected Papers Read Before the Engineering Society of the University of Michigan*." It was the oldest engineering college magazine in America. In 1887 the publication was formally given the name of the *Technic*. During the *Technic's* early years, the staff had no faculty supervision, and they had to personally pay for any losses incurred. Later, the College of Engineering gave assistance by paying for a full-page advertisement in each issue. In this way each department received publicity once a year. The *Technic* was also supported with profits from publishing the Michigan Engineer's Song Book and from the Slide Rule Ball.

The University of Michigan: An Encyclopedic Survey

In 1937 to celebrate the centennial of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, the Committee on University Archives suggested than an "Encyclopedia" of the University should be compiled to document the history of the institution. Wilfred Shaw was chosen Editor-in-chief. Over two hundred faculty and staff wrote the history and activities of the various divisions of the University, according to a carefully considered format. The resulting four volumes contain the most complete account of the University and its history. (Digital text available at www.umich.edu/~bhl/)

Acknowledgments



Ruth Bordin

Ruth Bordin received a B.A. 1938 and an M.A. 1940 in history from the University of Minnesota. She was discouraged from pursuing a Ph.D. because at the time many felt that a wife and mother could not also be a scholar. Throughout her life, however, Bordin was actively involved in research, teaching and writing.

From 1957 to 1967, Bordin was a curator at the Michigan Historical Collections, which preceded the Bentley Historical Library. From 1967-71 and 1975-78 she lectured at Eastern Michigan University.

In 1967 Bordin published *The University of Michigan: A Pictorial History* for the University's Sesquicentennial. Her other major publications included: *Women and Temperance*; *The Quest for Power and Liberty*; *Francis Willard: A Biography*; *Washtenaw County: An Illustrated History*; *Alice Freeman Palmer: The Evolution of a New Woman*; and *Women at Michigan*.



Howard Peckham

Howard Peckham received his B.S. in 1931 and his M.S. in 1933 from the University of Michigan. From 1936 until 1945 he served the Clements Library as Curator of Manuscripts and also as Lecturer in Library Science. From 1945 to 1953 Peckham was Director of the Indiana Historical Bureau and Secretary of the Indiana Historical Society. He returned to the University of Michigan in 1953 as Director of the William L. Clements Library and Professor of History. His book, *The Making of the University of Michigan*, was published in 1967.



Burke A. Hinsdale



Isaac Newton Demmon

Burke Hinsdale, was a professor of pedagogy at the University of Michigan. His book, *History of the University*, was a scholarly treatise on the rise of state universities, with numerous pictures and biographies of members of the Michigan faculty. The manuscript was not complete at the time of his death and was finished by Professor **Isaac Newton Demmon**.



Wilfred B. Shaw

Wilfred Shaw served as Director of Alumni Relations and Editor of the *Quarterly Review* from 1907-1929. He wrote *The University of Michigan*, a history of the University from its inception through the administration of President Burton. He also served as editor for *The University of Michigan: An Encyclopedia Survey*.



Shirley W. Smith

Shirley Smith received his Michigan degree in 1897. In 1898 he was an instructor of English in the Department of Engineering. He continued his studies and received an M.S. in 1900. A year later he became Secretary of the Alumni Association, serving until 1904. He was away from campus for four years before returning to become Secretary of the University in 1908. He served as Secretary for twenty-two years under four presidents, Harry Hutchins, Marion Burton, Clarence Cook Little, and Alexander Ruthven. He wrote two biographies: *James Burrill Angell: An American Influence* and *Harry Burns Hutchins and the University of Michigan*.

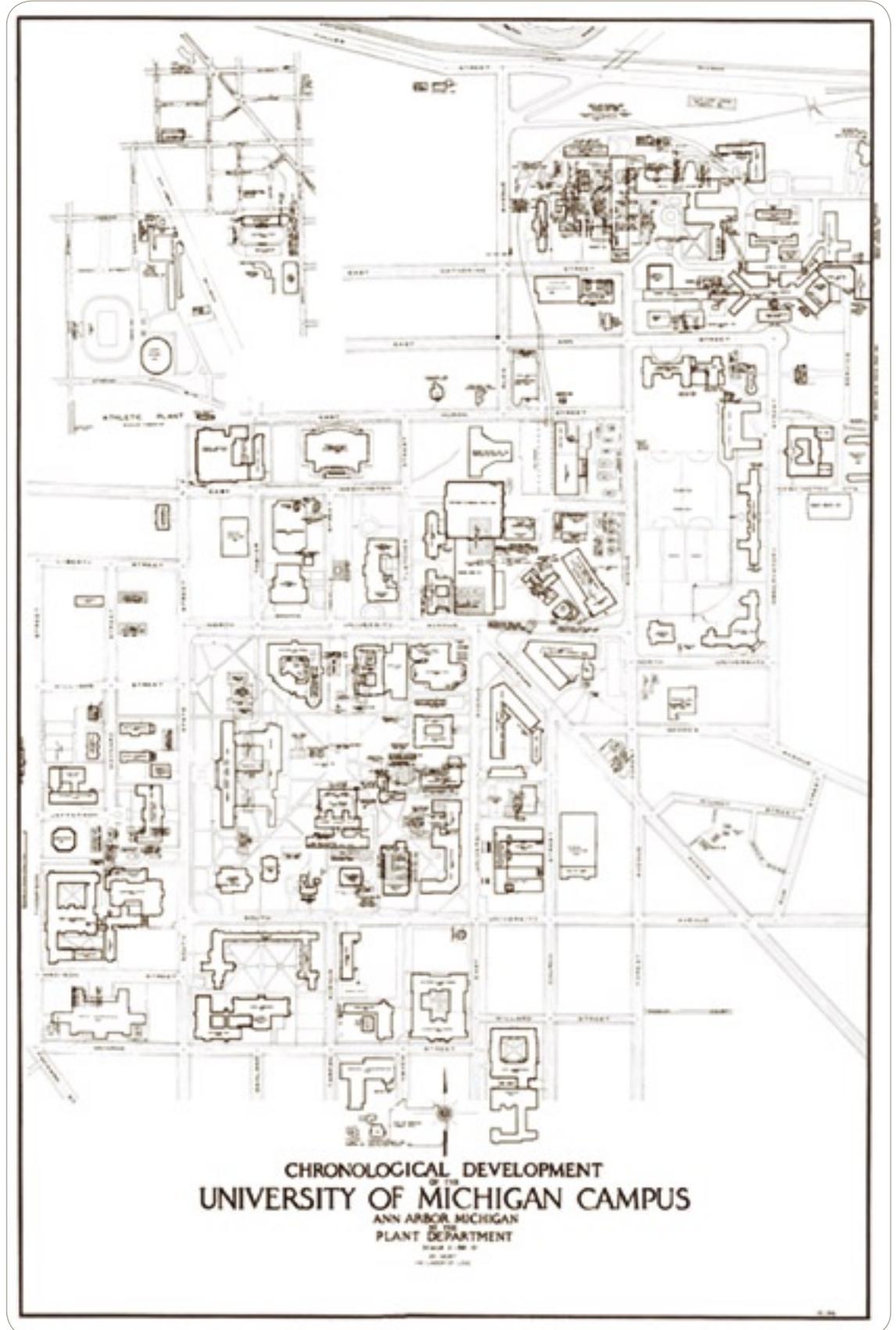
Acknowledgments

MORT'S MAP



Myron Mortenson

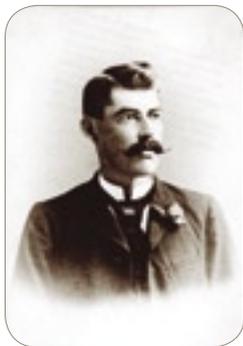
Myron Mortenson graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1931. He worked as an engineer in the Plant Department until 1954 when he became Chief Draftsman. Mort's great contribution to the University of Michigan history is his map with footprints of all of the buildings of the University from the beginning to the 1970s.



CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CAMPUS
ANN ARBOR
PLANT DEPARTMENT
by MORT
HIS LABOR OF LOVE

Acknowledgments

With gratitude and appreciation to all who created and preserved the images of the University of Michigan.



George Robert Swain

George Swain received his B.A. in 1897 and his M.A. in 1900 from the University of Michigan. Swain was an educator and a photographer. He taught school and served as principal to several schools. In 1913 Swain returned to the University of Michigan, serving as university photographer until 1949. He accompanied Professor Francis Kelsey of the Latin Department on four trips to Europe as a photographic technician, photographing valuable manuscripts for the university collection.

In 1924 and 1925 Swain was part of a university expedition which conducted excavations at Antioch in Pisidia. He and Professor Kelsey drove university cars from Brussels to Naples and three hundred miles across Asia Minor.

Swain's office was located in the campus library, where he produced negatives for lantern slides that were used in conjunction with lectures in fine arts and engineering. Negatives were developed in his home darkroom at 1103 Packard Avenue, since the use of chemicals was forbidden in the library building.



Janet & Melvin Ivory

Melvin Allison Ivory, another prominent photographer, came to Ann Arbor in the mid-1920's from Lansing, where he had done amateur photo finishing for his father's two drugstores. While an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, Ivory became the official photographer for the *Michigan Alumnus*, *Michiganensian*, and the Bureau of Alumni Relations. Ivory's wife **Janet** joined him in his work. The Ivory collection in the Bentley dates from the 1920's to the early 1970s. The collection documents Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan. Ivory produced cover art for the *Michigan Alumnus*. This gave him the opportunity to experiment aesthetically with unusual angles, lighting and subject matter.



Bentley Library

Many of the images that illustrate this Michigan Saga are from the Bentley Historical Collections. Many others originally appeared in the *Michigan Alumnus*, the *Michiganensian*, and the *Michigan Technic*.

The Bentley Library was established in 1935 to serve as the official archives of the University of Michigan and to document the history of the State of Michigan. Our thanks to the Bentley staff for their assistance.

The map of Thomas Jefferson's original sketch of his plan for the Northwest Territory (page 1), courtesy of the Clements Library.

The campus aerials and architectural sketches, courtesy of the Plant Extension Department.

The President's House new kitchen (page 320) courtesy of the *Michigan Daily*.

The contemporary campus images are from Jim Duderstadt's photo collection.

Special thanks to Dan Fassahazion and Andy Klesh for their technology assistance, Julie Steiff for editing this manuscript, Barbara Wood and Paula Yocum for pre-press assistance, and Jim Duderstadt for writing the Forward, for his careful edits, word-smithing, and knowledge about higher education in general and the University of Michigan in particular.



The Papyrus Hunter's Caravan

Dodge and Graham Brothers Cars Presented to the University For the Far East Expedition

Others who documented the history of the University of Michigan include: **J. Jefferson Gibson** who photographed the Medical School and compositions of classes, **J. Fred Rentschler** who served as apprentice to Gibson until 1890 when he opened his own studio, and **Sam Sturgis**.

“HAIL TO THE VICTORS”

(These words have been taken directly from an article in the *Michigan Alumnus* of October, 1979, p. 9.)

The year was 1898. Freshmen were still being lured off campus on snipe hunts, suffering impromptu haircuts by upper classmen and wishing they were sophomores. The student body was more football crazy than ever.

The *Michigan Daily* followed every move of the Michigan team, reporting the details of each day's practice. The fever grew as the Chicago game approached. Both Michigan and Chicago had been mowing down opponents all season.

The Michigan Central Railroad equipped two special trains to take 600 students and Ann Arbor fans to Chicago's Marshall Field for the big game on a bitter cold November 24. Arrangements had been made so that the results of the game would be phoned long distance back to the Opera House in Ann Arbor.

The Game was strenuous and rough, and while there were minor injuries, no man from either side had to be replaced. One of Chicago's extra points was blocked, keeping Chicago's score to 11 points. Michigan scored two touchdowns—one on a spectacular 65-yard run by Widman—and converted both extra points. Forevermore, the final score would read Michigan 12, Chicago 11.

“We were crazed with joy,” recalled Elbel. “We paraded in the dark. We yelled and followed our U-M Band, singing to the tune of Hot Time in the Old Town. It struck me quite suddenly that such an epic should be dignified by something more elevating, for this was no ordinary victory.

My spirits were so uplifted that I was clear off the earth, and that is when The Victors was inspired. Very shortly, the strain of Hail to the Victors came to mind, and gradually the entire march. Sweeping inspiring strains are not made—they flash unawares.

And so it was with the Victors. I could hardly have written it on order—neither did I speculate for one moment how many people ever would hear it. I put in a lot of ‘hails’ and I knew the fellows would get them in with the proper emphasis. Through them, the title suggested itself, and I dedicated it to the Michigan team of 1898.

After the game and snake dance, Louis walked to his sister's house in Englewood, about a mile and a half from Marshall Field.

When I got to my sister's house, somehow I had the presence of mind to write down the notes of that song. And, when I got to South Bend the next day, I not only tried out the song on my piano, but finished the entire refrain. Then the idea of a big march came to me, and I completed the whole work on the train that took me back to Ann Arbor for Monday's classes.”

When the Daily resumed publication on Monday, the headline on page one began with the words “Champions of the West.” Louis Elbel's victory song, inspired by one of the greatest games in football history, would ring out around the world forevermore. (*Michigan Alumnus*, October, 1979, p. 9)

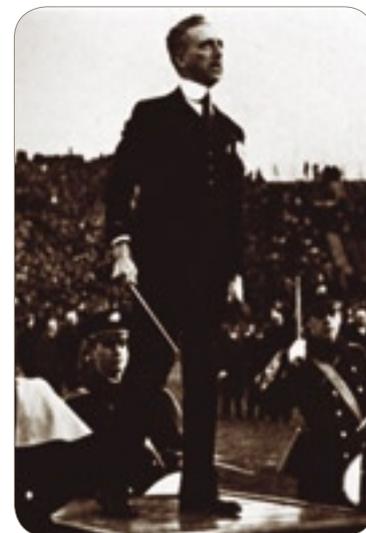
Louis Elbel was born in South Bend, Indiana on October 28, 1877. He was one of eight children. His Grandfather Elbel brought the family over from Arzberg, Germany, in 1851, and settled in South Bend to be near former neighbors from Bavaria. The family was unusually musical. The Elbels had enough different musicians to establish the Elbel Band and Orchestra in 1860, and, when Louis arrived 17 years later, it was almost predetermined that he would be a musician of some kind.

He once explained how he became a pianist: “As a boy of six, I was sent to Europe where relatives did their utmost to make me take up study of the violin. Not having any zest for the instrument, I became attached to the piano upon returning home and received my first lesson from my brother Richard. At age 10, I had committed (to memory) 40 pieces.”

Elbel's natural ability made him a child prodigy. He went on a musical tour of the West at the age of 12 and then traveled to Boston to study the piano further. By the time he was a high school senior, Louis Elbel was considered South Bend's most promising piano genius. None of his brothers and sisters had gone to college, so his decision to get a college education was a first in his family. He picked Michigan partly because of the Music School and because two older friends from South Bend were already there (*Michigan Alumnus*, November, 1977, p. 5).



Louis Elbel - 1898
From the Track Team Photo



Louis Elbel
Directs The “Victors” 1940

Victors

Now for a cheer they are here, triumphant!
Here they come with banners flying,
In stalwart step they're marching,
With shouts of vic't'ry crying,
We Hurrah, hurrah, we greet you now,
Hail! Far we their praises sing,
For the glory and fame they've bro't us,
Loud let the bells them ring,
For here they come with banners flying.

Far we their praises tell,
For the glory and fame they've bro't us,
Loud let the bells them ring,
For here they come with banners flying,
Here they come, Hurrah!
Hail! to the victors valiant
Hail! to the conqu'ring heroes,
Hail! Hail! to Michigan the leaders and best,

Hail! to the victors valiant,
Hail! to the conqu'ring heroes,
Hail! Hail! to Michigan the champions of the West.

We cheer them again, We cheer and cheer again,
For Michigan, We cheer for Michigan,
We cheer with might and main
We cheer, cheer, cheer with might and main we cheer.

Hail! to the victors valiant,
Hail! to the conqu'ring heroes,
Hail! Hail! to Michigan the champions of the West.

Louis Elbel, 1898