The first faculty of the Territorial University of Oklahoma consisted of seven persons. This number included President David Ross Boyd. Such a number sounds inadequate for educating the entire student body of a university and a prep school until we consider the small number of students enrolled.

During the first year of the university's existence, 1892-3, there were only 107 students enrolled. These were all students in the preparatory school. Because there had been few high schools in the territory and the ones that did exist had not had time to graduate any students during the three years since the run, the university found it necessary to take students direct from the grades. Many students found it necessary to study reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling.

Later when these students were ready for the freshman class in college President Boyd adopted the requirements for all state universities in order to give the university a high scholastic rating. The result of this wise move was that graduates of our territorial university were admitted to Harvard, Yale and Columbia universities.

Understanding of this type of scholarship may come only through understanding of the faculty members who established it and these in turn may be viewed best through the eyes of President Boyd.

“I received many applications to teach,” says President Boyd. “These I first answered asking them what their motives were in coming here. Too often the reply was that the applicant wanted to do research work or to write. These I didn’t even consider. What I wanted was teachers, men and women who would be willing to devote all of their energies to developing the fiercely earnest young students who had enrolled.

“Other applications were amusing. One from a young professor in Pennsylvania asked if there were any rowdies in the classes. He was preparing to come with a six shooter.

“My first faculty was composed of W. N. Rice, professor of ancient language and literature; Edwin DeBarr, professor of chemistry and physics; French S. E. Amos, instructor in English, history and civics; Henry Newton, teacher of voice and harmony; Mrs Viroqua Newton, teacher of piano and organ, and a professor of history, English and American literature who only stayed for a short time and whose name I can’t now remember:

“Our first faculty meeting was held on a warm evening out of doors, and the first business we attended to was the cutting of a large watermelon. After we ate the melon we discussed the arrangement of classes.”

Enrollment then was not the intricate process that it is now. There were no pink, blue and yellow cards to be filled out, no advisers or deans to see for the approval of sections. The process consisted of each student seeing Doctor Boyd
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A REUNION which recently took place in the offices of the University Press bore in it the elements of history. It was between Samuel S. Crawford, veteran printer of the campus, and Olin W. Meachem, of Henryetta, veteran state printer. Although Mr. Meachem was Mr. Crawford’s first employer the two had not seen each other for thirty-five years.

The past thirty-five years of printing in Oklahoma have covered a period of growth and development in the state which we of the “recent grad” class cannot understand. But to hear Messrs. Crawford and Meachem tell of their experience is to get a brief glimpse into our own state’s past.

A story of bringing some printing forms from Shawnee which Mr. Meachem tells is amusing in the light which it gives on the Indian scares in territorial days. “I was on my way back from Shawnee with forms to print on a cylinder press,” he says. “I was traveling in a wagon and ambling along through the black jacks east of town when I met an Indian squaw coming along the trail. When she stopped and grunted I was scared to death. I couldn’t get past her but finally distinguished that she was grunting ‘tobac.’ I had a whole supply in my pocket and gave it to her. She started to give back half of it but I was so frightened that I made her keep it all. I was afraid that her brave might be hidden among the trees.”

Another anecdote which Mr. Meachem tells of an experience as foreman of the Norman Transcript is of the stuff of history. An announcement was brought to him that Champ Clark was to make a political speech in Norman. He wrote

MR MEACHEM AND SAMUEL S. CRAWFORD

To have his schedule arranged and then being examined by the faculty to discover his ability.

The entire class schedule was printed on one page in the early catalogs but its sound assemblage of courses in mathematics, English, languages and music are apt to convince one that the student who had completed the early course is a more cultured man when he is through than the holder of one of our present bachelor of arts degrees.

The professors of the ‘90s were almost invariably men of learning and high intellectual attainments. Doctor Boyd describes them briefly as they come to his mind.

“James Shannon Buchanan came from Cumberland university in Tennessee to the university in 1895 as a professor of history and civics. He was actively interested in state politics but the community service which he rendered when he caused a city ordinance to be passed forbidding the killing of birds made him a favorite with me.

“Frederick S. Elder, who also came in 1895, had graduated from Princeton with honors in French but in the university he taught mathematics. This fact explains not only his versatility but his sound scholarship. He was the very highest type of scholar.

“In 1896 came Professor Paxton and Professor Parrington. Paxton was a graduate of the University of Missouri and of Harvard and taught Greek and Latin.

“Parrington had graduated from Harvard and taught English at Norman. Of his early days Adelaide Loomis Parker has written, “How can I tell you all it means to us to have him for a teacher? When we went into this man’s room, for an hour at least we lived in a different world. It was always quiet there and we could relax. There were other great teachers there then. In those days we were not so many but that sooner or later we all sat under the highest and the best. But somehow in Professor Parrington’s room we forgot the dry sun and never ending wind, and the painful and pressing problem of how to make a living and, while we were there, we lived.”

“This description explains our great grief at Professor Parrington’s death last July. It may explain in part too our pride in him when he was awarded the Pulitzer prize for his Main Currents in American Thought several years ago. But you would have had to know him to realize that he was also coach of the first football team that the university ever had.

“In 1899 James Wellings Sturgis came to the university to take the place of Professor Paxton who had left for a year’s study in Rome. A year or two before that had come the late Albert Heald Van Vleet. Dr. Van Vleet had received his Ph. D. at the University of Leipzig in Germany and had studied at Johns Hopkins university. I had met him at a national education meeting in Washington and considered him a fine addition to our faculty.”

President Boyd forgets the years which date his memories and smiles happily when he recalls the work, the happiness and the humor of his experiences in creating a great university. Then in retrospect he smiles and declares that there was never such wit and humor, fun and baiting and retaliation as when Parrington, Paxton and Elder, “our three bachelors” got together.