



## A Brief Narrative History

Duke University in Durham, North Carolina traces its origins to 1838 when Methodist and Quaker Families in rural Randolph County employed Brantley York as a permanent teacher for their subscription school. Under his leadership the infrequently used Brown's Schoolhouse became Union Institute. However, as Quaker support turned toward its own school in Guilford County, Braxton Craven, York's successor as principal in 1842, turned to the state for assistance. Craven sought and won from the legislature a rechartering of the academy as Normal College in 1851, and the privilege of granting degrees in 1853. Because the state's system of public school was emerging ever so slowly, Craven, a licensed and later ordained preacher, next turned to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to keep the school operating. The trustees agreed to provide free education for Methodist preachers in return for financial support by the church, and in 1859 the transformation was formalized with a name change to Trinity College. Though never devoid of financial difficulties, Trinity's enrollment increased, even attracting students from out-of-state, and the college managed to survive the vicissitudes of Civil War and Reconstruction.

Contrary to the experience of many nineteenth century private institutions, when the leader, Craven, died in 1882, Trinity survived through its Methodist connection and the interim leadership of President Marquis L. Wood, and a Committee of Management made up of businessmen John W. Alspaugh and James A. Gray of Winston, and Julian S. Carr of Durham. A most significant turning point occurred in 1887, when the youthful, Northern-born, Yale-trained John F. Crowell became Trinity's president. Committed to the German university model which emphasized research over recitation, Crowell directed a major revision in the curriculum, established the first campus-wide research library, and most important, persuaded the trustees that the college's future development lay in an urban setting where it would be far easier to attract student, faculty, and financial support.

In 1892 after a spirited competition among piedmont cities, Trinity opened in Durham, largely because of the generosity of Washington Duke and Julian S. Carr, influential and respected Methodists grown prosperous in the tobacco industry. John C. Kilgo, a dynamic administrator and spellbinding Methodist preacher, later to be elected Bishop, became president in 1894 and he greatly increased the interest of the Duke family in Trinity. Washington Duke offered three gifts of \$100,000 each for endowment, one of which was contingent upon the college admitting women "on equal footing with men." The college quickly accepted, having had women graduates in Randolph County in 1878 and women as day students in Durham. Benjamin N. Duke, Washington Duke's son, Durham resident, and longtime trustee, became the principal liaison between the college and the family.

Thanks to support from the Dukes and to an able, relatively young, ambitious, and largely native faculty, recruited from the new graduate schools at Johns Hopkins, Columbia, and other Northern universities, Trinity College had developed by World War I into one of the leading liberal arts colleges in the South. In 1903, the name of John S. Bassett, Professor of History, and Trinity became forever associated with the history of academic freedom. The college's trustees turned back widespread appeals for Bassett's dismissal when editorials he wrote for a scholarly journal questioned the prevailing views on race relations. This pioneering victory for academic freedom in the United States strengthened the college's reputation for independent thought and scholarship. Additional recognition came with Trinity becoming a founding member of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States; with membership with only one other southern institution in the Association of American Law Schools; with the selection of the school's first Rhodes Scholar; and with the establishment of a Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

Plans for a university organized around Trinity College dated from Crowell's presidency but it fell to William P. Few, president from 1910 to 1940, to bring the plans to fruition. With Ben Duke's blessing, Few began to share his dreams with James B. Duke, Ben's younger brother and by far the richest member of the family. In December 1924, James B. Duke formalized the family's historic pattern of philanthropy with the establishment of The Duke Endowment, a forty million dollar trust fund, the annual income of which was to be distributed in the Carolinas among hospitals, orphanages, the Methodist Church, three colleges, and a university built around Trinity College. To accomplish this last task in Durham nineteen million dollars was made available for the rebuilding of the old and for the creation of a new campus. Recognizing the unprecedented opportunity to forge a new identity, President Few urged that the school be called Duke University since the name Trinity College was not unique. James B. Duke agreed on condition that it be a memorial to his father and family.

Few, therefore, oversaw the metamorphosis of a small college into a complex university as the School of Religion and Graduate School opened in 1926, the Medical School and hospital in 1930, the School of Nursing in 1931, and the School of Forestry in 1938. In 1930 the original Durham site became the coordinate Woman's College which was merged back into Trinity as the liberal arts college for both men and women in 1972. The new West, or Gothic, campus about a mile distant became home to Trinity College for men, along with the hospital and the graduate and professional schools. The Law School, founded in 1904, was reorganized in 1930 and engineering, which had been taught since 1903, became a separate school in 1939. This was a greater transformation in a shorter period of time than had ever occurred in the history of higher education in the South. In 1938 Duke University became the thirty-fourth member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. The last of James B. Duke's stated desires for the university was fulfilled when the School of Business Administration, now the Fuqua School of Business, opened in 1969.

As noted by the trustees in 1924, the institution had had three names and two locations but "it changes again to meet changing conditions." Today under the leadership of Richard H. Brodhead, ninth president of the university and fourteenth of the institution, Duke University enrolls approximately 6,300 undergraduate and 4,500 graduate students representing almost every state and about 75 foreign countries. The curriculum has expanded to include studies in biomedical engineering, public policy, microelectronics, and black church affairs. While guided since 1859 by the motto *Eruditio et Religio*, or "Knowledge and Religion," Duke University continues to change to meet changing conditions.

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The pictures, l-r: Brantley York; Trinity College Randolph County, ca 1891; editors of the literary magazine, *The Archive*, 1896; James and Ben Duke; Duke Chapel; basketball, 1968; Epworth residents, 2002; Richard Brodhead