

If Gargoyles Could Talk

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Sketches of Duke University

William E. King

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*This book is dedicated to
H. B. K., C. H. K., and J. E. K.
who have shared many Duke experiences*

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Foreword

Twenty-five years ago the diligent efforts of a number of people connected with Duke University paid off in the establishment of the University Archives. For many years William B. Hamilton, professor of history and feisty leader in many good university causes, Benjamin E. Powell, university librarian, and Mattie U. Russell, director of the library's Manuscript Department, had pushed hard for the creation of a separate archives, where important historic materials concerning the university could be safely and centrally stored as well as properly catalogued and made available for research and reference.

With President Terry Sanford's blessings and financial assistance and the enthusiastic support of trustee and alumnus, W. M. Upchurch, the Archives was established in 1972 and Duke was also fortunate in the appointment of the first University Archivist, William E. King. A Duke undergraduate with a Ph.D. in History from Duke, King also had the additional blessing of having parents who were both Duke alumni. His professional training as a historian complemented nicely the love for the institution that ran deep in his family.

This is not the place to recount the many ways in which the university has benefited from the existence of the Archives. Many of us wonder, in fact, how the university managed without them for so long.

One of the unanticipated benefits of the Archives has been the series of articles concerning Trinity College and Duke history that King began to write in 1990. Appearing in the weekly campus publication, *Dialogue*, the seventy-one essays have covered a wide variety of topics in a fascinating and easily digested form.

Chronologically, six of the pieces deal with the years from 1838 until 1892, when first Union Institute and then Trinity College were in Randolph County, some seventy-five miles west of where the institution is now located. Twenty-two articles relate to the period from 1892 down to late 1924, when Trinity College was in Durham and began its steady climb toward academic strength. Thirty essays deal with Duke University since 1924, and twelve are sufficiently general to defy periodization.

Topically, the articles run the gamut from leading personalities in the institution's past to the construction of well-loved buildings. Athletics as well as individual professional schools receive attention. An almost-forgotten president; the origin of the Blue Devil mascot; the stonemasons and setters who helped erect the Tudor Gothic buildings on West Campus; the student dance bands of the 1930s;

the employment of distinguished Jewish scholars who fled Nazi Germany; the controversy over tobacco through the years—all these and more are illuminated by King's carefully researched and engagingly written articles.

Bringing them together so that a wider audience among those who love or are interested in Duke may enjoy them was a capital idea.

Robert F. Durden
Professor Emeritus of History
Duke University
August, 1997

Introduction

This volume reproduces a series of articles from the *Dialogue*, a weekly campus newspaper published by the Duke News Service. In 1990, Geoffrey Mock, the editor, asked me to contribute periodic articles on Duke history. As such, the topics are wide-ranging, often determined by issues of the moment or in response to frequently asked questions. They are not inclusive of the history of the university, having obvious omissions of subject matter. With seventy-one articles in print, Gerry Eidenier, Director of the Gothic Books Program, encouraged me to compile them in a book to share with a larger audience.

Despite the variety of topics, there are some evident themes in the compilation. Foremost is the fact that Duke University is founded upon its predecessor institutions, Union Institute, Normal College and Trinity College. The school has had multiple name changes, a relocation from Randolph County to Durham, and a significant expansion of its original Durham campus at the time of transition from a college to a university. But as the Board of Trustees noted in December, 1924 when the institution officially became Duke University: “Through all this outward change it has kept one soul; it has been guided by the same controlling faiths. Now it changes again to meet changing conditions.” Though radically different from its beginning, Duke University is built upon Trinity College, especially the Durham experience since 1892, but also the 19th century experience in Randolph County since 1838–39.

Duke University’s history can be confusing. For example, the institution marked its 100th anniversary with an elaborate yearlong celebration in 1938–39 and its 50th anniversary in 1974–75. It has been an academy, a college with a primary focus of training teachers and preachers, a liberal arts college and a multifaceted research university. All too often it is tempting, when writing or speaking about the university, to ignore its complexity and overlook historical perspective. It is fervently hoped that these articles of selected subjects will add clarity, correct error, and illustrate the varied contributions of the many individuals who have made Duke University what it is today. I have attempted to include new information, discovered in the daily operation of the University Archives, in each article in hopes that it will enrich and aid in understanding.

This book is not an authorized, official study. The selection of topics, interpretation and errors are mine alone. It is, however, written with a demonstrated loyalty to Duke University. I do not know when my first visit to campus occurred

but it was most probably at an early age when my mother served as president of the alumnae association. With a father, Carl H. King, who was a graduate of the last class of Trinity College in 1924 and mother, Mary Elizabeth Eskridge, who was a graduate of the first class of Duke University in 1925, and with three earned degrees from Duke myself as well as having additional Duke degrees among my brother, wife and children, it is no wonder Duke blue and white are my favorite colors. However, I hope my education in the history department is demonstrated by well-researched, professional articles.

Numerous individuals have been of assistance in many ways. Geoffrey Mock edited the initial articles. The staff of the University Archives, Thomas F. Harkins, Daniel L. Daily, and Robert Todd Crumley, suggested topics and assisted with research. Doris C. Parrish, Peggy W. Satterfield and Carol E. Walter prepared the manuscripts. I also am indebted to those who wrote letters of encouragement since it has not always been easy making deadlines while meeting the responsibilities of the archival program. Helen King has been especially encouraging throughout the endeavor. Funds from the Isobel Craven Drill Endowment for the University Archives assisted in the preparation of the manuscript. In the spirit of the cooperative endeavor that these articles have been, any proceeds from this book will be added to an archival endowment fund or a university scholarship fund.

William E. King
Duke University Archives
July 30, 1997