THE LEGACY

VIEWS
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Born Newark, N. J.; educated in public schools, private tutoring; graduated New Jersey Law School, LL.B.; post graduate work at New York University Law School; teaching at New Jersey Law School since 1912. Member of Newark Athletic Club, Essex Club, Down Town Club, National Travel Club, American Legion, Essex County Bar Association, New Jersey Bar Association, American Bar Association, Academy of Political Science. President of Hospital Council of Essex County; Vice-President of Northern Baptist Convention; Trustee of Dana College; Eastern Baptist Seminary; Treasurer Wakeham Examiners Foundation; Director Fidelity Union Title & Mortgage Guaranty Co. Practicing in Newark as a member of Sorg, Duncan & Bailey.

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The Story of New Jersey Law School

By Maurice A. Roblestein '32

Within recent years, there has been a revolutionary change in the methods of preparation for admission to the legal profession. There was a time, well within the memory of living practitioners, when the average aspiring law student usually achieved his legal learning by "reading law" in the office of a member of the Bar, who was his preceptor.

Gradually, the law school came to play an increasingly important part in the preparation for the practice of law. Little by little, the Bar Rules recognized the law school as an institution, and began counting attendance at twenty-four months of law lectures as equivalent to an equal period of clerkship. Today, it is safe to say, more than ninety-five percent of the applicants for admission to the Bar owe their knowledge of the law to the hours spent at some law school. The recently amended Supreme Court Rules go further, and require "satisfactory completion of law courses as a prerequisite to receiving credit for law school attendance."

When we thus view the areas being laid upon law lectures and law schools, it is readily apparent that the law school is becoming more and more the basis of legal learning in New Jersey. With those thoughts in mind, we turn to consider the oldest law school in the State of New Jersey, New Jersey Law School.

The youth of today would better understand the ideals which inspired the founders of New Jersey Law School if they could compare the present law school with a picture of it at its birth. Truly do its present massive buildings represent the realization of the dreams which were the inspiration to that small group of men, headed by President Corrigan and the late Dean Maxon, who founded the first law school in the State of New Jersey and fittingly called it New Jersey Law School.

These men saw the necessity for a law school in the northern part of New Jersey, where men who desired to enter the legal profession might study in a school which emphasized the true law. Local pride and a thoughtful regard for the education of the youth of our state were the dominating factors in their initiation and development of the school, and they gave unspuriously of their time, effort, money and opportunity. They sowed, that others might reap; they gave, that others might enjoy; they built well the cornerstone of legal education in New Jersey.

Among those who gave valuable aid and counsel to the founders in their plan were Frederick Frelinghuysen, L.L.D., at that time president of the Mutual Benefit Insurance Company; Honorable James E. Howell, former vice-chancellor of the Court of Chancery in New Jersey; and Edward D. Duffield, former attorney general of New Jersey and now president of the Prudential Insurance Company.

In 1898, the college was duly chartered by the State of New Jersey, its corporate purpose being "to maintain and operate a law school and establish and maintain a law library and to publish books." The opening class of New Jersey Law School was held on October 4, 1908, in the school's first home, the Prudential Building. One room was fitted out and the enrollment consisted of thirty students, many of whom today are leading members of the bar.

At that time, only years were required to complete the course and receive the LL.B. degree. Three years of high school work or an equivalent examination being adequate for admission. The school had no law library of its own, but the Prudential Insurance Company's accumulation of over nine thousand volumes was placed at the disposal of the students.

In May, 1909, the State Board of Bar Examiners officially recognized the institution as a law school of "established reputation," in accordance with the rules of the Supreme Court of this State, thereby permitting the students who were graduated to count the time spent in law school as part of the necessary time required in the serving of a three-year clerkship.

Later, by the provisions of the Laws of 1912, it was provided that "No degree shall hereafter be granted by any institution of learning within the State, without the approval of the State Board of Education." This provision was unanimously granted to New Jersey Law School. It was in 1912 also that the school extended its course of study to three years and raised the entrance requirements to four years of high school.

Meanwhile, steps had been taken to provide a permanent home for New Jersey Law School. In December of 1908, the opening year of the school, an old home-stead was purchased at 33 East Park Street. This building had been erected by Thomas Peddie, then Mayor of Newark, in 1875. Its purchase by New Jersey Law School paved the way for a succession of new buildings and additions to meet the ever-increasing demand for admission.

In 1916, title was obtained at 35 East Park Street, and after the buildings were razed there was erected on the site, in 1921, a building of beautiful Gothic architecture. The adjoining property was also purchased and on it erected a three-story building, which therefore served as the school's library building. These buildings on East Park Street served as the home of New Jersey Law School for many years, and it was not until 1950 that they were abandoned for the school's present quarters.

The enrollment continued to grow, meanwhile, from 30 in 1908, to over 200, in 1917. This number was considerably reduced during the World War by the enrollment of many of the students; the names of five of these are inscribed on the Roll of Honor in the lobby as having given up their lives for their country. In this connection, New Jersey Law School has the sad distinction of having had, as one of its graduates, the first American lawyer and aviator to be killed in the war, Lieutenant John Morehouse, Jr.

After the war the number of students increased by leaps and bounds, and in 1927 New Jersey Law School had the distinction of administering to one of the largest law student bodies in the United States.
The year 1927 is an outstanding one in the history of the development of the school from every point of view. In that year, the first Student Council was assembled, a constitution drawn up, and extra-curricular activities on a large scale began. Under the tutelage of the Student Council, the LEGACY appeared, the BARRISTER came into being, and LEX LOCI, the Student Handbook, was born; all in 1927.

In that year also, the beginnings of the expansion of New Jersey Law School into a full-fledged university appeared. In conformity with the desire to raise the level of its entrance requirements, and in consequence the standards of the school, a one year’s attendance at a recognized college was made a pre-requisite to entrance to the Law School as a candidate for the LL.B. degree. To enable local students to surmount the handicap of the local lack of a collegiate institution, a one-year pre-legal course was established in 1927.

In 1928, the entrance pre-requisite was advanced to two years of college work, and the pre-legal course was raised to two years.

Realizing the need of still larger quarters, the school in 1927 purchased the Ballantine Building at 46 Beecro Street, and after altering a part, made it the seat of the pre-legal school in 1928.

In the affiliated school, Seth Boyden School of Business Administration was chartered and given the degree-granting privilege. This school, offering a four-year course, was also situated in the huge Ballantine Building. In 1930, the pre-legal school became Dana College, offering a four-year course leading to the A. B. degree.

Meanwhile, extensive alterations were made in the Beecro Street building, and the entire huge structure converted into large class rooms, lecture rooms, reading rooms, and a two-story library capable of seating 500 students and of accommodating the collection of books which has now grown to over 10,000 volumes. On June 13, 1930, New Jersey Law School moved to its new quarters in this building, and here it may remain, a tribute to the genius and foresight of its founders.

And to our Alma Mater continuous to grow and prosper; never sacrificing efficient instruction to a desire for more size; never placing material considerations before the welfare of her students, who wish to assure her that they have always fully appreciated her attitude toward them, and who shall ever entertain feelings of the warmest nature for New Jersey Law School.