

History
at the
University of North Dakota
1885-1970

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History at the University of North Dakota An Introduction

The plan for each department to write a departmental history first emerged in conjunction with the Centennial Celebration at the University of North Dakota. The result was a series of departmental histories which ranged widely in quality and length. The Department of History, however, did not produce a formal history at that time. It may have been that the production of a volume celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the University occupied their collective efforts.¹ While work began on such a publication, it never advanced beyond a rather ramshackle document without any author listed and entitled: *A Centennial Newsletter*.² When President Charles Kupchella requested that departments and divisions bring their histories up to date in the run-up to the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the University, I undertook to write a basic history of the department from the first historian on campus until today. I quickly decided, however, that the task of writing the entire history of the department in a way that would do justice to the methods of our discipline was simply not possible in the time allowed. Moreover, the material for the most recent history continues in regular use by the department's officers and, consequently, has not been committed to the University Archives. In other cases, the faculty did not preserve documents, which at the time appeared to be inconsequently. Finally, delving into the recent past always runs to risk of re-awakening tensions between members of the department, and it seemed an unwise course for a junior, untenured faculty member. Consequently, I chose to end my history around 1970. The significant changes that took place in the department during the 1960s carried the department through the following decade.

This document follows in the tradition of institutional history. This largely derives from the reality that I am not an expert on history of the University, the state, or the developments within academia or the discipline over the course of the 20th century. Numerous names, events, and historical developments sent me scrambling for my copy of Robinson's, *History of North Dakota*,³ L. Veysey's, *The Emergence of the American University*,⁴ P. Novick's, *That Noble*

¹ R. Wilkins ed., *A Century on the Northern Plains: The University of North Dakota at 100*. (Grand Forks, ND 1983).

² *The University of North Dakota Department of History: A Centennial Newsletter*. Departmental Histories. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

³ E. B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota*. (Lincoln 1966)

⁴ L. R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1965).

Dream: The "objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession,⁵ and above all, L. Geiger's *History of the University of the Northern Plains*.⁶ The shadow of this last work, a fine example of institutional history, looms large behind these three chapters.

All things being equal, I would have liked to capture more of the experience of studying at the University during the first half of the 20th century. At the same time, I have also neglected to follow the example of the best kind of modern history which captures the personalities of the main characters in the narrative; for long stretches this history reads like the worst kind of prosopography, where individuals fade away behind an endless litany of credentials, accomplishments, and dissertation advisors.

Themes in the History of the Department of History

Whatever the faults in my research and analysis (and with apologies to Elwyn Robinson) there do appear, quite distinctly several "Themes in the History of the Department of History". Most of these themes have come to light only with the benefit of hindsight and, consequently, are not as prominent in my chapters as they perhaps could have been. In the interest of transparency, it must also be said that these themes may have resonated in my sources largely on account of their presence in the contemporary departmental discourse.

1. Lack of Resources. Hardly a report of the department lacked a cry for more resources. The requested resources might be earmarked for the library, for the seminar room, faculty salaries, office space, or even equipment. With the understanding that no department is likely to claim itself well-funded and that administrators are more likely to provide grease for a squeaky wheel, there is almost no question that the study of history ranked low on the University's list of priority even from its earliest days.
2. High Turn Over of Faculty. Closely related to the first theme, the turn over of faculty both junior in rank and occasionally senior in rank is a constant factor in the departmental discourse. It is clear that the typically high quality of junior faculty made it possible for them to move on to better positions at typically more research oriented universities (often in warmer climes). It is also clear that the departmental culture has not always been a

⁵ P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988).

⁶ L. Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*. (Grand Forks, ND: University of North Dakota Press, 1958)

happy one with faculty leaving because they perceived the opportunities to be limited at the University or the environment to be damaging to their career or even health.

3. **Animosity with Administration and Perceived Neglect.** The third theme is closely tied to the previous two, yet nevertheless deserving of its own place. The clashes between the department and the administration have occasionally be sensational (as in the clash between President Kane and Orin G. Libby), but what is perhaps more striking is the constant attitude of distrust and at times out-and-out dislike for members of the University administration. In some instances this distrust, such as between Libby and Kane or between Dean William Bek and Clarence Perkins or between various members of the department and Bonner Witmer, appears to be mutual, but far more striking is the almost total lack of attention from the administration on the Department. Perhaps by the Tweton Era (post 1965) the attitudes in the department began to change as the late 1960 and early 1970s were particularly productive times for the department.

While my first three themes are largely negative in character, the next three are more positive. They tend to reflect the profound sense of commitment felt by many of the scholars who have chosen to make their careers (or even just part of their careers) at the university.

4. **Regional focus:** From the time of Libby, if not earlier, the department has focused a large part of its energies on regional and local history. This is characterized by both institutional developments in the department and the intellectual predilections of its individual members, and is most visible in the development of the Orin G. Libby Manuscripts collection, the department's intermittent commitment to the North Dakota Quarterly (and its predecessors), and the seeming inevitability for its faculty members to be drawn into writing local history
5. **A Department of Great Men: Libby, Robinson, Wilkins, and Tweton.** The identity of the department for long stretches in its history was closely tied to its "great men." Until the 1990s, the department heads have always been male and even now the majority of members of the department are male. This trend follows larger trends in not only in American academic, but also in the field of history. The veneration of these Great Men, Libby and Robinson, and the tendency to see their personalities as essentially

synonymous with the department itself, is perhaps a trait more idiosyncratic to our department. While there is no denying the importance of these individuals, their exceptional place in the department's history needs to be balanced against more general trends in the history of the field, the university, and the department as well.

6. Balance between teaching and research. Finally, the department has always explicitly sought to balance its emphasis between teaching and research. The department held a consistent reputation as a productive department beginning in the 19th century despite its relative isolation for traditional scholarly resources and the overwhelming emphasis at the University through most of that time on teaching. This balance, which has characterized the field of history in general, developed in the department owing to a very high level of professional engagement throughout its history. Members of the department regularly attended regional and national conferences, produced peer reviewed scholarship for a discipline-wide audience, and generally kept abreast of trends in pedagogy.

A Word of Acknowledgement

The project was undertaken largely to satisfy my service obligations to the department. I prepared the first chapter over the course of the 2006-7 academic year and completed chapters two and three in the summer of 2007. The content of Chapter 3, in particular, benefited from discussions with Gordon Iseminger, Playford Thorson, and Jerome Tweton who were in the department during some of the period covered by this history. Special thanks should also go to Sandy Slater and Curt Hansen, the University archivists who guided me through the collection. Copies of this text circulated among my colleagues, but they are in no way responsible for the content I expect that there will be numerous sins of omission and inevitably the occasional sin of commission as I struggled with the fragmentary records preserved in the university archives.

This introduction, like most of history, is provisional.

Chapter 1

History before Libby

While most scholars regard Orin G. Libby as the “Father of North Dakota History”, he was not the first man to teach history nor was he the first individual to hold the position of Professor of History at the University of North Dakota. Horace B. Woodworth held these honors. The former farmer from Southern part of Dakota Territory taught history as well as philosophy, math, and even astronomy at the University of North Dakota from its inception in 1885 to his retirement in 1904. From 1902-1904 he held the rank of Professor of History at the University. In contrast to Libby’s relatively well-established professional credentials, Woodworth held a more fluid and ambiguous position both within the discipline of history and at the university reflecting the important changes to both of these institutions at the turn of the century. Consequently, the context for Woodworth’s appointment to the university and his career preserve important perspectives on the early years of higher education in state.

Woodworth’s story intersects with the history of the University of North Dakota and the history of history as a recognized academic disciplines in the United States. Woodworth’s migration from the Professor of Mathematics, Physics, and Astronomy to Professor of Moral and Mental Science to the Professor of History at the University of North Dakota was contemporaneous with the creation of the professional infrastructure of the historical discipline, most notably, the American Historical Association, which was intended among other things to establish the integrity of the discipline by developing a coherent set of professional standards. The role of the American Historical Association and its founders, particularly Henry Baxter Adams, in transforming the discipline in the United States from the domain of dedicated and erudite amateurs and to credentialed professionals is relatively well known.¹ The one factor that has not necessary been fully appreciated is that the transition from amateur historians to professionalized discipline was not simple a tug-of-war between a faction within and outside of the modern university. In many cases, like at the University of North Dakota, the transition from

¹ J. F. Jameson, “The American Historical Association 1884-1909,” *AHR* 15 (1909), 1-20; John Higham, *History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 16-19; P. Novick, *That Noble Dream*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47-60.

so-called amateur history to professional history occurred within departments and even within the individual's appointed to particular positions. In this regard, Woodworth represents a kind of missing link between the soon to be bygone days of amateur historians and the professionalization of the discipline which Orin G. Libby's arrival on campus marked.

Like many missing links, exploring Woodworth's place in the evolution of the university and the discipline, however, has proven to be particularly difficult. This is, in part, because of the lack of information on Woodworth himself – despite his central role in the history of the university – but also because of the dearth of sources on the universities formative years in general.² Some fragments of information appear in the President's annual reports to the board of trustees and the annual report of the Department of History to the President which either exist as freestanding documents or as embedded within the President's Report to the Board of Trustees. The minutes of the Board of Trustees' meeting for the first two decades of the university contain odd references to Woodworth and his pursuits at the University. Woodworth appears infrequently in the correspondence of Merrifield, Vernon Squires, Kennedy, and others. Unfortunately these correspondences contain regrettably little information regarding the man himself, his influences, or the reasoning behind the policies, events, and decisions that affected his role at the university. Later reminiscences offered by faculty members, the local press, and the *Dakota Student*, the University's student newspaper, provide some additional background and color, but little true substance. This general dearth of sources for the University's early years, plagues the two best studies of the University history – Vernon P. and Duane Squires's serialized history of the University published in the late 1920s and early 1930s and Louis Geiger's more expansive later work.³ Without diminishing the difficulties associated with the fragmentary record, one can see the source limitations presented in the study as a byproduct of the very process of professionalization that this study seeks to examine. The absence of comprehensive, bureaucratic records reflects, at least in part, the informality of life at the University in its first few decades where jotted notes, hastily composed reports, and impromptu

² L. Geiger, *University of the Northern Plains*. (Grand Forks, ND: University of North Dakota Press, 1958), 457-460 provides a brief survey of the material available.

³ V. P. Squires, "Early Days at the University," *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 18.1 (1927), 4-15; --, "The University of North Dakota, 1885-1887," *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 18.2 (1928), 105-118; --, "President Sprague's Administration, 1887-1891," *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 18.3 (1928), 201-230; --, "The First Quadrennium Under President Merrifield," *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 18.4 (1928), 313-344; D. Squires, "The University Attains its

visits provided structure for university affairs as much as carefully composed epistles and memoranda.

Despite these limitations, Woodworth's career remains sufficiently significant to serve as the center piece of this study. It will do this by both attempt to piece together Woodworth's place within the transformations of the University in its first two decades and by comparing his experiences to the experiences of his peers at the University of North Dakota and, more frequently, at other institutions in the larger region. The following article examines three particular elements of this transitional time. First, it will consider how Woodworth's position within the university shifted as the goals of the University changed. Second, it will contextualize the relationship between Woodworth's pedagogy and scholarship and the broader field of history. Finally, it will consider the place of Woodworth in Grand Forks' society and the memories of the students and faculty.

From Math, Physics, and Astronomy to History

From an institutional standpoint, Woodworth's career path was not terribly unusual in his time. Born in 1830, he grew up farming in rural Vermont and graduated from Dartmouth in 1854 at the age of 24.⁴ Upon graduation he continued to farm while serving as the principal of several New England boarding schools through the latter 1850s. By 1861, he had earned a degree Hartford Theological Seminary and preached in Connecticut and New Hampshire. His choice of careers, first in teaching and then in the ministry, was not unusual for Dartmouth College students in 1850s.⁵ His formative years there were spent in an institution steeped in the educational traditions of the 19th century which saw the university primarily as a "paternal organization in which the president and the faculty watched over their congregation to insure their spiritual, moral, and intellectual progress."⁶ There was, needless to say, little interested in peer-reviewed scholarship or academic achievement per se. Less concerned with academic success, many Dartmouth students, especially the sons of farmers from rural New England, sought the skills credentials to succeed in changing economic and social conditions of the 19th

Majority: 1901-1905" *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 21.4 (1931), 293-317; Geiger, *The University*, passim.

⁴ Contra Geiger, *The University*, 52-53 who dates Woodworth's B.A. from Dartmouth to 1857.

⁵ M. Tobias, *Old Dartmouth on Trial: The Transformation of the Academic Community in Nineteenth Century America*. (New York: New York University Press, 1982), 59-62.

⁶ Tobias, *Old Dartmouth*, 23.

century, and as might be expected many of them moved west. Woodworth followed this trend and left New England first to serve as the pastor in Congregational churches in Charles City and Decorah, Iowa for several years, before moving to Mt. Vernon in what is now South Dakota to farm in the early 1880s.⁷ In 1884 owing perhaps to his acquaintance with a member of the University of North Dakota's Board of Regents, F. R. Fulton, whom he had known in Iowa, he was hired by the University, an institution that was scarcely a year old, as Professor of Mathematics, Physics, and Astronomy.⁸

His appointment in this capacity may appear to be an odd beginning for a man who would come to inaugurate the Department of History, but it reflects the transformative era of higher education from which the University emerges. Woodworth was hired by Henry Montgomery and Webster Merrifield in 1885 who had emerged from the tumultuous first years of the University of North Dakota which included the dismissal of the first University President, William Blackburn, as responsible for both preparing the curriculum and hiring sufficient faculty to teach it. Merrifield's had graduated from Yale College in 1878 during Noah Porter's term as College President. Porter held strong opinions favoring the maintenance of a conservative curriculum emphasizing Latin, Greek, and moral education.⁹ In the early 1880s, he becomes known for his rejection of the elective system emerging at Harvard and other progressive East Coast universities and the preservation of the most traditional aspects of the American college education.¹⁰ Merrifield's background mated well with Montgomery's conservative educational roots amidst the strong English influence present in Eastern Canada to produce a curriculum for the University of North Dakota that emphasized Classical education and values.¹¹ It would have also sat well with the Board of Regents of the University, men like James Twamley, William T. Collins, and Charles E. Teel, who all held degrees earned from east coast colleges around the mid century.¹²

Both Merrifield and Montgomery were certainly attuned to the debate over whether a practical or more traditional curriculum was appropriate. The president of the University of Minnesota, William Folwell, had been ousted in 1884, in part, by trustees and faculty who

⁷ "His Illness Proves Fatal," *Grand Forks Evening Daily Herald*, December 22, 1906, 6.

⁸ Geiger, *The University*, 52.

⁹ L.R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*. (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1965), 30-40.

¹⁰ Veysey, *The Emergence*, 51-53.

¹¹ Geiger, *The University*, 41-44.

avored more a traditional approach to university coursework.¹³ A year later, a similar scenario befell the University of North Dakota's first president, William Blackburn, who had advocated a more practical and popular curriculum for the school. While the exact circumstances surrounding his departure are not entirely clear, and may have also involved personal differences with members of the Board of Trustees, he was relieved of duty after serving but one year. Merrifield and Montgomery served to fill the gap left by his departure and were responsible for putting together the core of men to implement their ambitious, if overly traditional, curriculum. This group, which included Horace B. Woodworth, would be known as the first Merrifield faculty (to distinguish it from the faculty hired by Merrifield during his official term as President of the University from 1891-1909). They hired along with Woodworth, John Macnie to be the Professor of English, French and German. He also had strong "traditionalist" credentials with a B.A. from the University of Glasgow in Scotland and an honorary M.A. from Yale in 1874.¹⁴ Like Woodworth, he would be a fixture at the University for years to come.

While it is difficult to assemble a complete picture of all those who were willing and available to teach at the University when Woodworth was hired, one candidate stands out and perhaps sheds light on the kind of men Merrifield and Montgomery sought for their new faculty. In 1885, the applicant pool for Woodworth's position did not appear particularly deep; he was one of two chosen from four applicants.¹⁵ Among his competition for the position was Elwood Mead from Lafayette, Indiana who had applied to be a Professor of Mathematics or History. Elwood Mead gives his name to Lake Mead for his service as the head of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1924-1936 during which time the Hoover Dam was built. Mead's training, a Bachelor of Science from Purdue University, was hardly more suited to teaching history than Woodworth. His degree, however, was from an unapologetically practical university in contrast to Woodworth's background as a preacher and a teacher from Dartmouth College.

Interestingly enough, despite the interest of some qualified men, there was clear concern regarding the absence of a historian on the University faculty. The first catalogue of the

¹² Geiger, *The University*, 11. Novick, *Noble Dream*, 63-67 for a general discussion of the role of Boards of Regents in appointing faculty.

¹³ J. Gray, *The University of Minnesota 1851-1951*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), 66-70; Veysey, *The Emergence*, 69.

¹⁴ Geiger, *The University*, 53-54.

University in 1884-1885, for the Arts Course required history of Freshmen (Greece and Rome), Second Years (European and English History), and Third Years (Constitutional History of England and the United States), and it was offered as an elective for Seniors.¹⁶ In the early years of the University when there were few qualified students the lack of such required classes, especially for upper classmen, was less of a concern than the dearth of classes for first year students or students at the college preparatory level. In 1885-1886 Macnie, the Professor of English, French and German taught Greek history and in 1886-1887 he taught Roman, Greek, and English History. Woodworth taught some history in the preparatory department which in the early years of the University housed more students than the university department itself. Montgomery and Merrifield, however, were aware that the lack of a fulltime professor of history was one of the principal needs of the young university. Montgomery opined in his second report to the board of Trustees's in June of 1885: "But probably the greatest need of all is a fund for the employment of first class men to take charge of chairs in Metaphysics, History, the Physical Sciences, and Pedagogics. By a draft on the energies of the Professor of Modern Languages instruction in History and Mental Science may be carried on for another year, but this cannot be continued longer."¹⁷

It is doubtful, however, that Montgomery and Merrifield recognized the need for a professional historian. In fact, the first graduate program in history in the U.S. had begun less than a decade earlier under Henry Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. It was only in 1884 with encouragement from Daniel Coit Gilman, President of Johns Hopkins, H. B. Adams and others such as Andrew D. White, President of Cornell, that Baxter, Jameson and others had founded the American Historical Association as part of a broader effort to establish the fixtures of a professional identity.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the creation of the AHA was not an immediate cornerstone of professional identity. It was largely populated by amateur historians, a handful of foreign trained scholars, and some teachers of undergraduates, as graduate training in history was almost unheard of in the U.S; at late as 1984, in over 400 universities and colleges in the U.S.

¹⁵ Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Trustees. Vol. 1. 115, 128. University Archives. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

¹⁶ *University of North Dakota Catalogue 1884-1885*. (Grand Forks 1885), 12-18 This list varies from the courses listed by Gieger, *The University*, 42. This may be because of the fluidity of the early curriculum or a simple mistake.

¹⁷ Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting. Volume A, 206. University Archives. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

there were only 20 fulltime history teachers and less than 30 graduate students.¹⁹ Despite the dearth of individuals with professional credentials and the novelty of formal graduate education in the U.S., in February of 1884 – a year before Woodworth or Mead had applied – Merrifield received a letter from Edward W. Bemis, the principal of the Marcy Grammar School in Minneapolis asking whether the University would be interested in his services to teach history. Bemis was an early graduate of the Johns Hopkins seminar in history and offered as references Adams and Gilman.²⁰ There is no evidence that he received consideration for the position. He goes on to teach economics at the University of Chicago from which he was famously dismissed in 1895 for criticizing the Rockefeller gas monopoly.²¹

The policies of the University, however, began to change with arrival of Homer Sprague on campus in 1887 who held markedly different attitudes toward the qualifications of its faculty.²² Sprague, while also Yale graduate differed considerable from Merrifield, was also well-connected and friendly with many of the important figures involved in the transformation of American University life in the latter years of the 19th century. He counted among his friends, Andrew D. White, who taught history at the University of Michigan and was an inaugural member of the American Historical Association, and from childhood Gilman, the President of Johns Hopkins responsible for hiring Henry Baxter Adams and a supporter of the AHA.²³ Men like these supported the development of History as a discipline and its place within the academy, and clearly influenced Sprague’s idea of a university as “preparing the young to be valuable members of the body politic.”²⁴ This “utility oriented” approach to university education was tied closely then in philosophy and institutional roots to the development of the professional standards.²⁵ By 1888, Sprague had hired Ludovic Estes to replace Woodworth as the Professor of Mathematics, Physics, and Astronomy. Estes held a Ph.D. in Physics from Michigan and worked hard to develop laboratory science at the university which was seen as a key contribution

¹⁸ T. L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 168-177 for a nice, concise discussion of the creation of the AHA.

¹⁹ Higham, *History*, 4; Jameson, “The American Historical Association,” 3. Novick, *Noble Dream*, 47-50.

²⁰ Webster Merrifield to Edward Bemis [Bernis]. February 14, 1884. Orin G. Libby Manuscripts Collection, Merrifield Papers, Collection 146, Box 2, File 4. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

²¹ David Hogan and Clarence Karier, “Professionalizing the Role of ‘Truth Seekers’,” *Interchange* 9:2 (1978-1979), 47; Novick, *Noble Dream*, 68.

²² Geiger, *The University*, 65-67.

²³ Geiger, *The University*, 65.

²⁴ Geiger, *The University*, 65.

²⁵ Higham, *History*, 10-12.

to a useful education. As a result of Estes hiring, Woodworth moved to Chair of Didactics, Mental, and Moral Science and Principal of the Normal Department. By 1890, he would have as part of his responsibilities the requirement to teach history.²⁶

This is the context, then, of Woodworth's brief stop as the Chair of Didactics, Mental, and Moral Science and Principal of the Normal Department and his final arrival in 1890 as the chair of the Department of History. The actual workings of this shift are clear. Woodworth did not like the position as principal of the Normal Department, which was primarily responsible for teaching secondary school teachers in the state, and felt that it detracted from his lectures in History and Mental and Moral Science. By 1890, Woodworth asserted his hope that "the course in History may be more fully developed in the near future and that it may be giving the prominence which its importance demands,"²⁷ and he duly appeared as the Professor of Mental and Moral Science and History. In this new position Woodworth begins to prepare a more complete and consistent offering of University level history courses – namely in 1890 offering a course to juniors on the constitutional history of England and course on the History of Civilization for students in the Letters Course (which required less math and had a stronger emphasis on literature). These classes were complemented by courses in logic, psychology, and the history of philosophy. Woodworth's brief statements on pedagogy or educational philosophy suggest the link between his classes in philosophy, psychology, and history; in his report for 1890 he explains that teaching psychology partially as a lecture and partially as a recitation was "to encourage habit of independent thinking and thorough investigation."²⁸ It goes without saying that these habits of the mind fit within the character of Sprague's conception of the University, even if the Woodworth lacked the professional status that graduate departments of history and organizations such as the AHA would come to imparted in their members. His new title, on the other hand, reflected an awareness on the part of the administration that narrower, more professional disciplinary focuses were becoming the norm at institutions throughout the U.S.

By 1892, Sprague had resigned as president of the University and Merrifield succeeded him. Merrifield's attitudes toward the function of the university had changed markedly over the

²⁶ Squires, "President Sprague's Administration," 214.

²⁷ *Report to the Board of Trustees*. Vol. 3., pp. 102-103. University Archives. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

preceding years, something that he himself acknowledged. According to Geiger, Merrifield characterized the Merrifield-Montgomery curriculum as “grotesque.”²⁹ A good example of the transformation of Merrifield’s direction came in 1891 when Woodworth had suffered a prolonged illness which kept him from many of his normal teaching duties. At the same time, the Principal of the Normal Department, George Hodge, moved to become the Director of the newly created Conservatory of Music established. In response to these two events, Merrifield hired Willis M. West, the Superintendent of Faribault Schools, to serve as the Principal of the Normal School and Professor of History. While not a product of the august east coast seminars in history, West held a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Minnesota. His subsequent career trajectory, however, provides an interesting counterpoint to Woodworth’s. West’s stayed at the University of North Dakota’s only briefly, and by the end of 1892, he returned to the University of Minnesota to take the place of Professor Harry Pratt Judson who had been hired away by the University of Chicago where he would ultimately come to be the head of the Department of Political Science as well as the President of the University.³⁰ Judson was an important figure in the development of the study of history at the University of Minnesota. He had encouraged the development of history as a matter of study at the Minnesota as well as “pedagogics,” serving with the title Professor of History and lecturer on Pedagogy there.³¹ West followed Judson’s lead in combining the study of history and pedagogy at the University of Minnesota for two decades and writing some of the most influential history textbooks in U.S. History. The failure of the University of North Dakota to retain his services prompted Merrifield to note: “His resignation is great loss to the University and causes deep regret that the University is not in a position to pay such salaries to professors at least now who will not be tempted to similar institutions in surrounding states by the salaries there paid. I fully believe it would be the soundest wisdom for the University to pay its professors \$2500 a year and call no man to its

²⁸ *Report to the Board of Trustees*. Vol. 3., pp. 102-103. University Archives. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

²⁹ Geiger, *The University*, 42.

³⁰ Squires, “The First Quadrennium Under President Merrifield,” 319-320. It is worth noting that the academic “rumor mill” functioned just as nimbly in those days. Clarence Haskins, in a letter to Henry B. Adams comments that Judson’s move the Chicago “ought to be a good opening for someone” at Minnesota (see: W. Stull Holt ed., *Historical Scholarship in America, 1876-1901, As revealed in the Correspondence of Herbert Baxter Adams*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938), 163)

³¹ Gray, *The University of Minnesot*, 87 and 109. A position he would hold briefly at the University of Chicago before being replaced by the German trained Americanist Hermann von Holst. See: T. W. Goodspeed, *A History of the University of Chicago 1891-1916*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), 207-210.

professorship who are not worthy and would not be able to command an equivalent salary elsewhere.”

At the same time as the University of North Dakota and University of Minnesota were working to establish a faculty of history, other universities in the Midwest likewise sought to invest in creating departments in line with the developing professional standards. In 1890, the University of Wisconsin hired a young Johns Hopkins Ph.D. candidate, Frederick Jackson Turner to replace his supervisor there, William Francis Allen who died in 1889 having taught history and ancient languages. Allen like many of the faculty of his day did not have a Ph.D., but established credentials from Harvard and later from work at Berlin and Göttingen. His scholarly production ranged from European history, to recorded Slave songs from the American South, to a significant contribution to G. Stanley Hall’s *Methods of Teaching History*.³² Allen, like Woodworth and Judson, had come of age prior to the professionalization of the discipline, but he, nevertheless, adapted and contributed to the changing standards of the day. He began to teach history at the University of Wisconsin in the mid 1870s, and he believed himself to be among the first to make American History a requirement in 1879-1880.³³ Turner, in contrast, was in the process of earning his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins under the tutelage of Adams and Richard T. Ely.³⁴ His research interests would remain, to a certain extent, narrower than his predecessor at Wisconsin, but his teaching interests remained every bit as broad. He reports to Adams in 1889 that he was teaching “French Revolution, Primitive Society, Dynastic and Territorial History of the Middle Ages, Constitutional History of the U.S., and a seminary in History of the Northwest.”³⁵ With the arrival of Clarence Haskins, Turner’s classmate at Johns Hopkins in 1890, and Turner’s successful completion of his Ph.D. in the same year, the Department of History at Wisconsin had two historians with Turner serving as Professor of American History and Haskins as Professor of Institutional History. At that time Turner taught American Constitutional History, American Colonial History, Nineteenth Century, and seminary, and Haskins taught English History, English Constitutional History, History of Institutions, Greek History, and seminary. Turner and Haskins, both of whom held Ph.D.s and were to become prolific scholars, as well as Presidents of the AHA, were hired by the University of

³² Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 21-23.

³³ Holt, *Historical Scholarship*, 87-88.

³⁴ Bogue, *Strange Roads*, 43-57.

Wisconsin for \$2000 a year.³⁶ It would seem that Merrifield's complaint about the low salaries of University of North Dakota faculty in the early 1890s was not entirely justified.³⁷

Much like Woodworth, Allen, Judson and West carved their positions in the field of history out of a number of pre-existing disciplines and interests in the academy. These scholars saw history as a discipline as having particularly close ties to long standing concerns within the academy ranging from pedagogy to ancient languages, to the more broadly construed moral and mental sciences. This contrasts the next generation of scholars who establish their professional credentials in the seminars of Germany, Johns Hopkins and elsewhere which tended to focus on particular problems distinct to specific times and places in the past. Despite these differences, it was the interaction between these two groups of scholars that ensured the discipline of history had a solid base in the modern academy.

Woodworth: Teacher and Scholar

It would be easy based on credentials alone to emphasize the difference between a scholar like William F. Allen and his successor Frederick Jackson Turner or ultimately Horace B. Woodworth and his more august successor Orin G. Libby. To do this, however, would be to overlook both the developments within the institutional structure of the university and the work of men like Woodworth and Allen at their respective institutions. A closer examination of Woodworth's role in establishing both a curriculum and contributing to the scholarly discourse in the discipline of history will demonstrate that the professionalization of the discipline of history was not entirely externally stimulated. Not only did Woodworth continuously revise his curriculum, but he also produced published works that showed both an awareness of larger scholarly trends and a commitment to pedagogy.

The earliest offerings at the University in the field of history reflected late 19th century interests in institutional and constitutional history epitomized in the work of Adam's seminar at

³⁵ Holt, *Historical Scholarship*, 123.

³⁶ Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher*. (New York: Oxford University Press 1973), 88.

³⁷ It was not until 1901 that John G. Halland was hired to teach history at the Agricultural College in Fargo. He had served as the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the state of North Dakota from 1896-1900 and had held an A.M. having attended Luther College in Iowa, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Valparaiso, and the Chicago School of Psychology. While like West, Halland was notable for holding an advanced, graduate degree, his background in secondary education, reflected continuing close tie between history and pedagogy, rather than research, in the minds of many university administrators at this point. (W. C. Hunter, *Beacon Across the Prairie: North Dakota's Land-Grant College*. (Fargo, ND: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies), 37.)

Johns Hopkins and concomitant with an understanding of historical study as a way to ensure good and conscientious citizenship.³⁸ In 1886-1887, Woodworth offered classes in the Constitutional History of England and the Constitutional History of the United States using the then recently-translated Hermann von Holst's, *The Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, as the textbook.³⁹ Adams and others of the burgeoning professionalization movement greatly admired Von Holst's work for its "most impartial and scientific treatment."⁴⁰ While it is impossible to know what, exactly, Woodworth taught in his classes, it is worth noting that works like von Holst's, while carrying on the standard Whig interpretations of history reflected the modern state of scholarship in the discipline. Ten years later in the Catalogue of 1895-1896, Woodworth showed professional development in his use of course material. While he still relied on the Israel Ward Andrews' rather outdated textbook *Manual of the Constitution of the United States* and assigned the work of the amateur historian George Ticknor Curtis,⁴¹ these works are listed alongside it not only the work of von Holst as well as the works of and the professional practitioner Woodrow Wilson.⁴² It is from the latter, more professionalized branches of this intellectual tree that O. G. Libby would spring with his early works on Constitutional History.⁴³

It is well known that the professionalization project in the discipline of history was as rooted in a particular method – most notably the seminar and the emphasis on the careful reading of actual documents, but it was not detached from a topical element. In G. Stanley Hall's much cited, *Methods of Teaching History*, Adams recommends not only the study and writing of local history, but of a kind that seeks to establish "the constitutional basis of local self-government in

³⁸ Higham, *History*, 10-15.

³⁹ H. Von Holst, *The Constitutional and Political History of the United States*. Vol 1. translated by John J. Lalor and Alfred B. Mason; v.3, by John J. Lalor and Paul Shorey. (Chicago: Callaghan Co., 1876).

⁴⁰ H. B. Adams to Hermann Eduard von Holst in Holt, *Historical Scholarship*, 36-37.

⁴¹ I. W. Andrews, *Manual of the Constitution of the United States*. (Cincinnati: Wilson, Hinkle & Co 1874). Most likely: George Ticknor Curtis, *Constitutional history of the United States, from their declaration of independence to the close of their civil war*. 2 vols. Vol. 2 edited by J. C. Clayton (New York: Harper and Co. 1889). The formation of the discipline of history had regrettably passed Curtis by. For a negative review of Curtis's work see: D. H. Chamberlain, Review of G. T. Curtis, *Constitutional history of the United States, from their declaration of independence to the close of their civil war*. *AHR* 2 (1897), 549-555.

⁴² W. Wilson, *Congressional Government: A study in American politics*. (Boston : Houghton, Mifflin, 1885); --, *The state; elements of historical and practical politics*. (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co. 1889).

⁴³ For discussion of Libby's place in the discourse of Constitutional and Institutional history see: R. Wilkins, "Orin G. Libby: His Place in the Historiography of the Constitution," in O.G. Libby, *The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution 1787-1788*. (University of North Dakota Press, Grand Forks 1969), 5-20. James. H. Hutton, "The Creation of the Constitution: Scholarship at a Standstill," *Reviews in American History* 12 (1984), 463-477.

church and state.” Along these lines he commends the work of J. Macy at Iowa College (later Grinnell College) is “one of the most active pioneers in teaching ‘the real homely facts of government’ and who in 1881 published a little tract in Civil Government in Iowa.”⁴⁴ Macy’s tract, published by Adams series, *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, includes a rather detailed discussion of the development of the Iowa constitution.⁴⁵ While Macy’s work may have been of a finer quality with a greater emphasis on contextualizing narrative and the preservation and reconstruction of the affairs of the earliest settlers in Iowa, it is not fundamentally dissimilar from Woodworth’s relatively modest scholarly effort, *The Government of the People of the State of North Dakota*. Eldredge and Brother, a textbook publisher in Philadelphia, published the work both separately as well as bundled with Newton Thorpe’s *The Government of the Nation: A Course in Civil Government based on the Government of the United States*.⁴⁶ In the preface, Woodworth notes: “the new interest in the study of Civics is a hopeful sign. But the study ought not to be confined the study of the Constitution of the United States. Home government in the township, in the county, and in the State has more to do than the national government, in matters connected with the home, family, and daily life of the citizen.”⁴⁷ It begins with a twenty page history of the state before a chapter detailing the basic narrative of the states founding. The bulk of its pages, however, are committed to a detailed analysis – almost of an exegetical nature – of the content, institutional apparatus, and, in some cases, reasoning behind the text of the constitution. Perhaps it is more useful to contrast Woodworth’s book with that of the former President of the University, William Blackburn’s which details the history of the territory and early statehood of the Dakotas. Blackburn’s work apparently written during 1892 and published 1902 with revised notes and forward in De Lorme W. Robinson, is highly fragmentary and primarily anecdotal in nature.⁴⁸ It lacks the bent toward institutional history characteristic of the professionalization of history in the latter years of the 19th century as well as the emphasis on primary sources (in Woodworth’s case this involved including the complete text of the Constitution). One can, of course, object to

⁴⁴ G. Stanley Hall, *Methods of Teaching History*. (Boston: Ginn and Company 1883), 163-164.

⁴⁵ J. Macy, *Institutional Beginnings in a Western State*. *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*. Second Series. Vol. 7. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University: 1884).

⁴⁶ Newton Thorpe, *The Government of the Nation: A Course in Civil Government based on the Government of the United States*. (Philadelphia: Eldriged and Bro., 1900).

⁴⁷ Woodworth, *The Government of the People of the State of North Dakota*. (Philadelphia: Eldriged and Bro. 1986) iii.

⁴⁸ William Blackburn, “A History of Dakota,” *South Dakota Historical Collections* 1 (1902), 42-162.

this comparison as involving two different genres but during a period when the genre of history itself was just beginning to be formalized, but the comparison nevertheless would seem to place Woodworth more firmly in the evolving, professionalized school emphasizing institutional and Constitutional history than in the less formal school of historical writing manifest in Blackburn's work. Woodworth's book is only surpassed in 1910 when James E. Boyle wrote *The Government of North Dakota*.⁴⁹

A greater affirmation of Woodworth's understanding of the professional discourse perhaps emerges in the curriculum that he established over his long career which remained relatively stable even after his retirement and Libby's arrival and promotion. Both shared an interest in institutional and Constitutional history, and it is unsurprising that the core courses – those of U.S. and English History persisted well into the 20th century as Course 1 in the catalogue of history. Even after the myriad changes that shaped the modern university – the emergence of the pure elective system, the move to semesters, the slow growth of the faculty available to the Department of History – there remained an emphasis on institutional and Constitutional history. This, of course, is no surprise as Woodworth's famous successor Orin G. Libby wrote his dissertation, and probably his most important work, on the U.S. Constitution.⁵⁰

Woodworth: Man and Society

The final key element of the professionalization process evident in the career of Horace B. Woodworth is that his work as a historian provided him with his income rather than previously acquired or long held wealth. While the social standing and backgrounds necessary to gain access academic positions varied among the rapidly changing universities during the late 19th and early 20th century, initially, at least, the opportunity of paid teaching positions in the discipline opened to individuals of more modest means than their 19th century predecessors.⁵¹ Salaries earned by teaching provided these individuals with the time and resources for research and writing at the same time that AHA sought to establish professional standards that replaced

⁴⁹ J.E. Boyle, *The Government of North Dakota*. (New York: American Book Company, 1910). Boyle goes on to teach at Cornell and become an important figure in the study of agricultural economics.

⁵⁰ O.G. Libby, *The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution 1787-1788. Economics, Political Science, and History Series of the University of Wisconsin* 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1894).

⁵¹ Novick, *Noble Dream*, 63-66. See: A. Creutz, "Social Access to the Professions: Late Nineteenth-Century Academics at the University of Michigan As a Case Study," *Journal of Social History* 15 (1981), 73-87.

stylistic elegance with rigid and almost mechanical precision characteristic of the modernist cult of objectivity.⁵²

While little specific detail is known of Woodworth's financial situation, there is no reason to assume that he was wealthy. In fact, he spent much of his life farming, first in Vermont and then in various places in the Midwest. A modest rural background would have been in keeping with many of Dartmouth College's students. With his appointment at the university his salary was \$2000 a year consistent with other faculty of his rank. This would have allowed him to live comfortably in town – he lived in a modest house at 815 S. 5th St. in Grand Forks – and to enjoy the benefits of a middle class lifestyle. Although as his position as a professor at the University would have afforded him some social clout as well as responsibilities, he spent some of his on charitable activities.⁵³ In a statement read by Vernon Squires, Joseph Kennedy and M.A. Brannon into the minutes on the occasion of Woodworth's retirement in 1904, it is noted that he contributed money to the university's maintenance.⁵⁴

Woodworth's family life likewise seems consistent with a middle class and perhaps upwardly mobile existence. He had two daughters, and it is possible to gain some sense of his position in the community and American society by considering their lives. Alice Woodworth Cooley worked in the administration of the Minneapolis city schools and co-authored a well-regarded English grammar.⁵⁵ In 1901 she returned to Grand Forks to take up a position in the School of Education before she retired in 1905 she was the Assistant Professor of Education. She also taught for a semester her father's course titled *The Reformation as an European Event* in the 1901-1902 academic year when he was ill. With a well-developed professional reputation and access to solidly middle class society, she married C. F. Cooley who would become a local judge. Woodworth's other daughter, Henrietta (Hattie) Woodworth also taught at the University briefly in music in 1889, although her father objected to her appointment.⁵⁶ She married W. A. Gordon a New York City native and Amherst graduate who made his fortune as a real estate

⁵² Novick, *Noble Dream*, 45-85.

⁵³ Higham, *History*, 10.

⁵⁴ Minutes, University of North Dakota Faculty Meeting, October 12, 1904. University Archives. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

⁵⁵ D. Squires, "The University Attains its Majority: 1901-1905" *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* 21.4 (1931), 298; Alice Woodworth Cooley and W. F. Webster, *The New Webster-Cooley Course in English*. 2 Vols. (Chicago: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1905).

⁵⁶ W. Sprague, President of the University Report to the Board of Trustees of the University of North Dakota. Oct. 7th, 1889. University Archives. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

developer and insurance broker. He was for many years a prominent citizen in Grand Forks and a staunch supporter of the university in the crisis of the 1890s at one point travelling with Merrifield to Bismarck to lobby on the university's behalf.⁵⁷ The intermarrying of Woodworth's daughters with members of the local "gentry" is a good indication that the Woodworth family was not limited by the later breach between "town and gown". Recalling the situation perhaps 15 years later, Orin G. Libby's eldest son, Charles, noted that university families tended to live near one another and children of the university professors did not necessarily play with the children in town.⁵⁸ While the information of Woodworth himself remains modest, his family demonstrated access to middle and upper class society in Grand Forks.

Despite the appearance that Woodworth circulated among the elite society of Grand Forks, there are some indications that Woodworth himself remained dependent upon income from his position at the university. After he retired he received a modest pension from the university of \$600 a year and professor emeritus standing. Webster Merrifield, who had been in regular contact with Carnegie Foundation in an effort to secure funds for a new library, in 1906 inquired whether Woodworth would be eligible for a Carnegie Fund Pension.⁵⁹ In this letter Merrifield specifically cited his friend's former salary of \$2000 a year. Woodworth did not live to hear that he had been awarded a Carnegie Pension. The letter announcing that he had been awarded a Carnegie Pension of \$1000 a year for life arrived two days after his funeral in 1907.⁶⁰

Conclusion

Placing Horace B. Woodworth's career at the University of North Dakota in its professional, academic, and social context provides a distinct insight into the emergence of history as a profession at the University of North Dakota. The goal of this brief article was to offer a gentle corrective on the idea that the professionalization project in the discipline of history sprung fully formed from several prestigious intellectual hubs (Harvard, Johns Hopkins, later Wisconsin and elsewhere) whence properly qualified individuals streamed forth to pollinate

⁵⁷ Geiger, *The University*, 104.

⁵⁸ Charles Libby and Margaret Libby Barr Interviewed by John Davenport on October 30, 1975. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. Oral History Interviews Collection. Collection #1213, Box 1, File 15 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

⁵⁹ Merrifield to Henry S. Pritchett. April 12, 1906. Orin G. Libby Manuscripts Collection, Merrifield Papers, Collection 146, Box 2, File 2. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

⁶⁰ *The Dakota Student*, Jan. 12, 1907. 4

universities throughout the U.S. This model, with its emphasis on academic prosopography at the expense of individual development, posits that the main impetus for the development of history as a profession was external to the structure and faculty of the university. While Orin G. Libby's status as "Father of North Dakota History" should in no way be diminished, his arrival at the University of North Dakota in 1902 deserves a more refined context. The case study of Woodworth shows that creating space in the university dedicated for the "Professor of History" preceded the appointment of an individual, like Libby, who held the typical array of scholarly credentials characteristic of the discipline at the turn of the century. In many cases the intelligent and intellectually qualified individuals who served as Professors of History transformed their own identities to accommodate, in some capacity, many of the professional standards projected from Henry Baxter Adam's seminars and the increasing emphasis on formal rigor encouraged by the American Historical Association and academic publications. This internal transition at University of North Dakota was, on the one hand, the product of limited resources, disparate and changing priorities of the university, and the growing competition for the limited scholars with professional credentials. On the other hand, it speaks to the general effectiveness of Woodworth as a member of the faculty. His ability to transform his own credentials in response to national expectations is clear in his publications and the persistence and sophistication of the curriculum that he implemented. Woodworth's standing in Grand Forks society, however, emphasizes that he was not perceived as an outsider bringing a foreign profession to the prairie, but rather like many of the locals a man determined to make good in a changing environment.

Chapter 2

The Era of Libby and Perkins

The first three decades of the twentieth century perhaps mark the most dynamic period for the Department of History and for the University more broadly. The retirement of Merrifield in 1909 and the receding influence of the faculty hired in the 19th century coincided with the arrival of first Frank McVey and then, in 1917, Thomas Kane as Presidents of the University.¹ These men epitomized the new professionalized academic discipline and with varying degrees of success sought to mold a modern university from the varied faculty assembled by Merrifield and his predecessors on the North Plains. McVey favored faculty with Ph.D.s, created opportunities for research sabbaticals, and increased substantially the pressure on faculty to publish.² He also realized that faculty morale was an important aspect of a healthy university and sought to improve sociability among the faculty and recognized the importance of an open and frank relationship with many of the entrenched faculty leaders. Kane's style perhaps, as much as the continued development of the University into a more professionalized academic institution led to more serious difficulties, as L. Geiger ably recounts in his history of the University. Many of the tumultuous incidents that characterized of the later years of the McVey Presidency and early years of the Kane administration appear today as the growing pains of a complex institution. In particular, McVey and Kane found occasional resistance to their efforts to redefine the responsibilities of the President and his relationship to the faculty. The tensions often revolved around the qualifications of new faculty members – particularly the desire to hire faculty who had earned Ph.D.s – and the growing desire of faculty to protect their intellectual and academic freedom.

The tensions and changes found at the University during these decades coincided with a period of significant political and economic tensions within the state. The so-called Second Boom of the early 20th century had ended and the difficult economic times of the 1920s and the 1930s presented the University with a new set of challenges. The economic problems of the state not only led to serious financial difficulties for the University but also fed the rise of

¹ Geiger, *The University of the Northern Plains*. (Grand Forks, 1958), 193-198; 275-276.

² Geiger, 199-201.

powerful political organizations, such as the NPL, that charged many aspects of public life with a political current.³ This political current tracing just below the surface infused the sometimes tumultuous discourse of university life with a factional and conspiratorial tone. Conservatives, in particular, had attacked economist James Boyle and sociologist John Gillette for the political elements of their research in agricultural economics and sociology of the rural poor respectively. Typical of this moment was the efforts of N.C. Young, an avowed conservative and head of the Board of Administration of the University, to oust law school professor Joseph Lewinsohn who was an active supporter of Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Bull-Moose Party while on the law school faculty in 1912. Lewinsohn was not attacked simply on the basis of his involvement in controversial local politics, but also on account of his alleged incompetence as a teacher.⁴ This blending of political motives with allegations of a genuine academic character led several leading members of faculty, including Orin G. Libby and his more progressive friend and colleague, John Gillette, to form a local branch of the American Association of University Professors. While the A.A.U.P. often remained strangely silent during the turmoil of the late teens and twenties, the great challenges and changes facing both the University and the department frequently played themselves out at the intersection of political, academic, and even pedagogical discourses.

Throughout this tumultuous period at the University, the discipline of history underwent its own transformation to acquire a very different appearance by the 1930s. Enrollments steadily increased as did the size of the faculty who tended to possess credentials not dissimilar from those expected of faculty today. This properly credentialed faculty produced an impressive array of publications, a solid reputation in the state and university, and a group of prestigious and influential alumni. It is with only a little exaggeration that the department's faculty of the mid-century looked back on this period of the department's history as a "golden age".⁵

The story of the successes and struggles of the university, department, and its faculty during this period have survived to a relatively remarkable degree in the papers of O. G. Libby. Libby's fastidious character ensured that a large number of his private papers survived, as did much of his personal and professional correspondence and his annual reports on the Department

³ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*. (Lincoln 1966), 327-419.

⁴ Geiger, 277-279.

to the University President. This material has formed the background for many of the modern studies on Libby's professional and personal character and contributed to Geiger's general work on the University. Libby's material on the department found complements in the annual catalogue of courses which were updated throughout this period to show not only the courses but also the faculty responsible for them. For the second half of this chapter, the work of Elwyn Robinson, particular his unpublished autobiography, which I discuss at somewhat greater length at the beginning of chapter 3, provides an insightful guide to departmental affairs. Counterpoints to the intradepartmental sources appear occasionally in the papers of Franklin McVey and Thomas Kane and rarely in the correspondence of John C. West and William Bek, the longtime Dean of the college of the Arts, Science and Literature. Despite the increasingly bureaucratized nature of the University during the first third of the 20th century, the history of the department remains frustratingly fragmentary and L. Geiger's history must continuously provide support for the numerous interpretive leaps present in this interpretive synthesis.

The Arrival of Libby

Without a doubt Orin G. Libby is the most significant historian and among the most significant scholars to emerge at the University. While his reputation as the first professor of history at the University perhaps deserves some modification, it is nevertheless clear that his name was synonymous with the Department for at least the first 20 years of his lengthy tenure at the University.⁶ Moreover, his influence extended far beyond the university walls as he played the central role in the development of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, the preservations of archival material from the state's early history, and the emergence of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association.

It is not my place to chronicle Libby's legacy at the University, in the State, and in early 20th century North Dakota society, this task has fallen to Prof. G. Iseminger.⁷ What this second chapter will emphasize is the problematization of Libby's relationship with the University more broadly with particular attention to his ideas of the how the department should develop in the

⁵ UND History Department Faculty - John Parker, Elwyn B. Robinson, Robert Wilkins, and Louis Geiger. Interviewed by John Davenport on October 17, 1975. Collection OGL #1213, Box 1, File 7 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

⁶ G. Iseminger, "Dr. Orin G. Libby: A Centennial Commemoration of the Father of North Dakota History," *North Dakota History* 68.3 (2001), 6.

⁷ See in particular: G. Iseminger, "Dr. Orin G. Libby," *passim*.

first two decades of the twentieth century. It is fair to say that Libby's vision for the department, while not always in concert with the administration of the University or even the policies ultimately adopted, exerted a significant influence over its development. In contrast to the work of Woodworth, Libby sought to establish the department's professional credentials at a time when the professional expectations of the discipline of history remained in considerable flux.⁸ This occurred at the same time as the University itself was undergoing "stresses and strains" as it sought to determine the course for the fitting for the preeminent institution of higher learning in the state.⁹

Libby's Training

Orin G. Libby received his undergraduate education from River Falls State Normal School in Wisconsin and graduated with a normal diploma in 1886. He then taught in Wisconsin schools for four years before entering into the undergraduate program at the University of Wisconsin in 1890. He received a B.Litt. from Wisconsin and then matriculated into their graduate program in history to study under Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner, as I discussed in Chapter 1, was a relatively newly minted Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins Seminar system. He was soon joined by the Medievalist Charles H. Haskins, who would specialize in "institutional history," and the economist Richard T. Ely, both with close ties to Johns Hopkins.¹⁰ These three men ensured the successful transplant to the Wisconsin of the famed seminary system.¹¹ It was in this system that Libby earned his M.A. in 1893 and his Ph.D. in 1895 with a dissertation entitled: "The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution 1787-1788." The University of Wisconsin's new series on Economics, Political Science, and History, modeled on Johns Hopkins' series with a similar scope and under the direction of the triumvirate of Hopkins men, Ely, Turner, and Haskins, published this work as its first volume in 1894. He was one of Turner's first students and some would argue that Libby was his best student at the University of Wisconsin.¹²

⁸ P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge 1988), 86-249.

⁹ Geiger, 275.

¹⁰ Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down*. (Norman 1989), 60-77.

¹¹ Allan G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner*, 70.

¹² R. Wilkins, "Orin G. Libby: His Place in the Historiography of the Constitution," in O.G. Libby, *The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution 1787-1788*. (University of North Dakota Press, Grand Forks 1969), 5-7.

His dissertation, which perhaps stands even today as his most significant work, focused on institutional and constitutional history. Broadly speaking this kind of scholarship was typical for the day. Libby's emphasis on the economic basis for the Constitutional votes, however, while perhaps initially underappreciated, ensured that his work would resonate with the direction of scholarship during the first decades of the twentieth century and become marked as a particularly significant contribution in the field. It is worth noting that Libby was to present some of his conclusions at the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association in place of Turner who had begged off. The AHA, reluctant to allow Libby, then a graduate student, to appear on the program, requested that Turner honor his commitment, which he did, presenting a paper entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and introducing his famous frontier thesis to American historiography.¹³

After graduation, Libby continued to teach at Wisconsin assisting Turner in that growing and dynamic department. He was largely responsible for classes in European history, which was not particularly uncommon for scholars trained in American history in those days and would remain a standard practice in the Department of History at the University of North Dakota throughout the first half of the 20th century. In time, however, he grew to resent having to work in Turners expanding shadow, particularly having to teach almost exclusively outside his specialization, and friction developed between the scholars. By mid winter 1902, Turner, apparently annoyed by Libby's relentless ambition, recommended him for the position at the University of North Dakota recently made available by H. B. Woodworth's move to part time status.¹⁴

Libby and UND: The Early Years

Turner surely informed Libby of his actions, although it seems that Turner recommended Libby without his consent. Libby must have expressed considerable reservations to his friend William Schaper, a professor at the University of Minnesota, as early as February 2, 1902. In response to his concerns, Schaper offered an encouraging letter. "The University of North Dakota is still young and small. Its future is before it."¹⁵ A month later, Libby still

¹³ Iseminger, "Orin G. Libby," 3.

¹⁴ Iseminger, 5; A. G. Bogue, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down*. (Norman 1998), 172.

¹⁵ William A. Schaper to Libby, February 2, 1902. Collection OGL # 49, Box 7, File 34. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

equivocating, concerned, apparently that the newness of the University, its small size, and lack of funds would limit his ability to achieve his goals. Schaper did not mince words, acknowledging that “to go so far west, on the one hand, is a backward step...”¹⁶ On the other hand, it is also clear that the University lobbied Schaper to attract Libby. The letter of March 11th mentions Senator LaValley, who evidently spent time in Minneapolis and worked to recruit Libby through Schaper. Whatever Libby’s initial reservations – and concerns about resources in particular will arise continually during Libby’s career at the university – by the time of President Merrifield’s March 10th letter offering a position arrived, Libby was prepared to accept the position.

With the hiring of Libby, the University had, at last, a professionally trained historian. Merrifield seems to have agreed that Woodworth would retain the title of Professor of History and Libby would assume the title Assistant Professor of History until Woodworth’s retirement. Their respective salaries, however, reflected the real distribution of responsibilities: Woodworth would earn \$1200 and Libby \$1000.¹⁷ Libby carried much of the teaching and administrative load. In the 1902-1903 academic year Libby provided the majority of the report’s text to the president and earned a 50% raise to \$1500 dollars a year.¹⁸ By 1903, Libby would write the entire report and receive yet another raise to \$1750 a year.¹⁹ Woodworth, of course, would retire the next year having taught only part time since 1902.

When Libby arrived, the place of history within the requirements of the university had been in some flux over the preceding decade as the university deliberated on how fully they might embrace the “elective” system.²⁰ By 1896, the university required one course of history which was a broad survey of Medieval History, English Constitutional History, and American Constitutional History for all degrees.²¹ Over the next few years there were some small changes; for example, in 1902-1903 academic year American history was oddly dropped from the catalogue which instead required only English History and Medieval History.²² In 1903,

¹⁶ William A. Schaper to Libby, March 11, 1902. Collection OGL #49, Box 7, File 34.

¹⁷ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1901-1902, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

¹⁸ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1902-1903, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

¹⁹ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1903-1904, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

²⁰ L.R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*. (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 1965), 36-40, 66-70.

²¹ *University of North Dakota Twelfth Annual Catalogue*. (Grand Forks 1896), 37-38

²² *University of North Dakota Eighteenth Annual Catalogue*. (Grand Forks 1902), 44, 60-61

however, the university dropped history as a requirement at all moving to a full elective system which made history courses one of a number of ways of earning a Bachelor of the Art.²³ During Libby's first two decades at the University, he largely maintained the central focus of the curriculum on English and U.S. History, and only expanded the number of offerings if part time faculty became available. The curriculum lost some of Woodworth's courses – like his Reformation as an European Event – and over time acquired a more traditional appearance with courses offered covering canonical time periods and featuring titles that would still be in place in the departmental catalogue today: the Nineteenth Century, The Reformation, The Renaissance. Outside of the Seminars, which will be discussed below, perhaps the most innovative class offered by Libby was a course designed for teachers which he team taught by various members of the department. It is essentially impossible to compare the actual content of the courses offered by Libby to those of Woodworth as almost nothing of Woodworth's papers or notes survive and the student accounts of him praise him in a generic way, but it is not going too far to suggest that the department under Libby began to resemble the department for the remainder of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the Woodworth's and Libby's consistent emphasis on constitutional and institutional history more broadly reflected the perceived link between an understanding of constitutional history and the development of civic mindedness in students.²⁴

Despite the broad similarities, one should not underestimate the importance of Libby's most significant addition to the department catalogue and the hallmark of the professionalized historian's craft: the Seminar. In 1903-1904, the very year that Woodworth retired, Libby offered the first "seminary" in U.S. History at the University. Libby finally introduced the Northern Plains to the seminar system which by this period was over 25 years old. It originated in Germany and came to the United States at Harvard and then more famously at Johns Hopkins before migrating across the nation largely in the hands of Johns Hopkins graduates. Libby first experienced the seminar at Wisconsin with Turner, a Hopkins graduate, and became a fervent devotee. Libby's initial seminar focused on his own research, the constitutional and economic history of the U.S.²⁵ In 1905-1906, however, he introduced a seminar on the history of the Northwest focusing on the history of North Dakota and Canada. These courses apparently met

²³ *University of North Dakota Nineteenth Annual Catalogue*. (Grand Forks 1903), 53-55

²⁴ Higham et al. *History*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1965), 9-15.

²⁵ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1905-1906, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

about every other week and attracted 8-15 students. They featured student reports based on the analysis of primary documents and the critique of secondary works. The seminar environment fostered the kind of competitive and collaborative work that often produced fine quality original research.

With the passion of a convert, Libby's reports to the president advocated the importance of these courses despite their relatively modest enrollments. The work of the students in these classes demonstrated Libby's idea of history for the public good and coincided with his revitalization of the previous moribund state historical society. Moreover, for the seminar to function at an optimal level it needed access to primary sources for the early history of the state, and as no one had begun the arduous task of collecting this material, Libby took it upon himself. The results of his work and the work of his students in the Seminar on the History of the Northwest allowed him to boast: "by means of the studies pursued in this course the students have an opportunity to apply the lessons of history in a concrete and practical way to certain problems in the development of the state."²⁶ After the 1907-1908 academic year the most significant papers composed by these students would be published by the State Historical Society in their *Collections*, the scholarly journal that Libby himself would edit with exacting standards for nearly 40 years. At the same time that Libby extolled the value of these seminary classes and their importance to the state, he continuously complained about the lack of necessary books, maps, and lantern slides as well as the lack of faculty to expand the offerings of the department. While Libby's persistent complaints over the lack of funding would perhaps foreshadow more significant conflicts later in his career, his plaintive voice occasionally brought about the changes that he desired. For example, by 1910 he was able praise the value of the departments slide lantern, and there was a regular if constantly changing supply of adjunct or visiting faculty and cross-listed courses to fill out the departmental catalogue.

Libby's work promoting the seminar provided the foundation for the development of a graduate course in the Department of History. In 1908-1909, Libby is proud to report that two graduate students participated in the seminar, and he expected that their thesis work would appear in the *Collections*.²⁷ Over the next 7 years 10 students completed the work for the M.A.

²⁶ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1905-1906, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

²⁷ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1908-1909, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

degree in the department.²⁸ Moreover, Libby collaborated with J.M. Gillette from the Department of Sociology to advise the first Ph.D. from the University, George R. Davies. Davies would ultimately go on to teach primarily sociology, but he did contribute to the Department of History for several years. He ultimately resigned his position at UND in 1928 to take a position at the University of Iowa.

The cooperation of graduate students like Davies contributed to Libby's ability to expand the offerings in the department. The expanding curriculum and diverse programs offered in history reflected the growth of the University in general; as the university grew and enrolments increased, Libby sought every opportunity to expand the offerings of the Department of History. The instructors upon whom Libby relied, of course, ran a range of competence. G.R. Davies, as we have discussed, was a product of UND, and fixture in the department for most of the second decade of the 20th century. He also relied upon figures like Luella Hall who received her M.A. under Libby in 1919, and ultimately would earn a Ph.D. in History from Stanford University and teach in California. Libby also drew in faculty from other departments around campus. As we have already noted, Gillette taught on and off in the history department as did James Boyle who had arrived in the Department of Sociology from Wisconsin in 1904 and ultimately went on to a distinguished career at Cornell. Wallace Stearns also taught during this time in the Department of History. He received his M.Div. from Harvard Divinity and his Ph.D. from Boston University. He was a professor of religious history at Wesley College when it relocated to Grand Forks from Whapeton in 1906.²⁹ He published rather extensively including his well-regarded *Fragments of Greco-Jewish Writers* and numerous articles.³⁰ Stearns taught Ancient and Medieval History as well as contributing to the seminar. Stearns ultimately moved on to Fargo College after 1912. In the late 'teens G. Hult the long-serving Classicist at the University cross-listed some ancient history courses apparently taught in the Department of Greek and Latin with history courses adding further breadth to the curriculum.

While curriculum changes marked most significantly Libby's arrival, he also sought to have the department contribute to the rapidly developing intellectual life of the university. For several years the Department of History led a lecture series which included faculty from across

²⁸ Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1914-1915, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

²⁹ Geiger, 144.

³⁰ Wallace Nelson Stearns, *Fragments from Graeco-Jewish Writers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908).

the University and featured talks on historical topics ranging from the Ancient Near East to Native American Culture. In 1907/1908 the department announced the Winship Scholarship and it appeared regularly in the University Bulletin's list of awards and prized from 1908 to 1912. The award was of \$75 funded by George B. Winship the publisher of the Grand Fork Herald for the best paper on American history from the History seminar.³¹ The scholarship required that the paper would be revised and submitted to the *Collections* of the State Historical Society for publication. It was, according to Libby, the first scholarship offered by the University (although it was certainly not the first prize, award, or honor), and he clearly conceived of this as an important step toward encouraging the kind of intellectual competition that was the mark of a vital university.³² Perhaps the most significant event for the general intellectual life of the University to take place in Libby's tenure was hosting the meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in 1908. This event included not only the regular slate of papers and panels, but also the *Pageant of the Northwest*, an elaborate play depicting the history of the settlement of the Dakotas.³³ His leadership in this organization included his election first as Vice President in 1909 and President in 1910.³⁴ Over time, Libby tireless efforts to promote his own department allowed him to emerge as a leader on campus as well. At a time when committee work was hardly expected of faculty, he served voluntarily on the campus War Committee and, after the war, on the Memorial Day observance and Recognition program honoring the veterans, as well. This willingness to be active, and, indeed, a leader in the life of the university community did not come without risks as would become apparent later in his career.

Libby's efforts to bring the university to prominence and his own gradual rise among the ranks of professional historians in the U.S. continued to be hampered by what he perceived to be substandard working conditions at the university. Libby's plaintiff calls for additional resources become shrill at times as he regularly employed massive and detailed missives that could quickly escalated polite exchanges to a more serious and severe tone. A good example of this was his clash with President McVey. In 1916, McVey replied to a typical request by Libby for additional faculty to support a new rule requiring all students to take a course in history with a

³¹ *Bulletin of the University of North Dakota*. (Grand Forks 1908), 35-36.

³² Department of History Report of the Departments to the President 1908-1909, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

³³ University of North Dakota and Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *The Book of a Pageant of the Northwest* (Grand Forks, N.D: Times-Herald Pub. Co., 1914).

³⁴ Iseminger, "Orin G. Libby," 6-7

letter suggesting that the State Historical Society should chip in to provide additional faculty in the department as they have benefited from the university support of the department in the past. This suggestion hit a nerve with Libby and led him to respond with a scathing two page attack on the suggestion. Libby's response was argumentative and led to an increasingly frosty exchange between the two men. It is unclear whether the exchange influenced the decision of McVey not to fund additional faculty for the department in the next year, but it certainly reflected the kind of hostile exchange with the President of the University that would some years later contribute to Libby's precarious position at the university.³⁵

The Department in the Crosshairs: Orin G. Libby and Thomas Kane

While numerous aspects of Libby's career at the University and in the state in general have become legendary, his clash with the President Kane has remained somewhat infamous in Libby lore. Geiger found the tumultuous early years of the Kane presidency deserving of no less than 13 pages in his general history of the University and assigned Libby pride of place in his description of the clash.³⁶ Libby's character, politics, and understanding of the role of faculty in University life made him particularly vulnerable to attacks from the administration who sought faculty who supported their views or remained detached from the governance of the University.

The most popular impression of Libby comes through clearly in Iseminger's portrayal of the man as the "defender of academic standards and university protocol." This stood in stark contrast to Kane who from his earliest days on campus "consistently took the side of leniency in matters of discipline or academic standards and that he had only casual regard for the university constitution."³⁷ While these characterizations are perhaps fair, in the larger context of the time, matters such as university protocol and academic standards for both faculty and students were hardly fixed points. In fact, the university constitution had only been implemented a scant few years before Kane's arrival on campus as one of the last acts of the McVey Presidency, and few precedents had firmly established the extent of its authority.³⁸ In this void of *de jure* policies,

³⁵ For the correspondence between Libby and McVey see: Collection OGL #46, Box 6, Folder 23.

³⁶ Geiger, 304-316.

³⁷ Iseminger. "O.G. Libby," 8.

³⁸ Geiger, 281-283.

men like Libby and Kane with strong personalities held forth expectations that their views would command significant authority.

Libby's strong personality gave his independent perspective a particular edge in the politically charged climate of the post-war period. Most scholars consider the appointment of Thomas Kane as President of the University to be decidedly political. More Progressive minded members of the board, some of whom were strong NPL supporters, saw the selection of Kane to the presidency as a victory. In fact, George Totten, a leading NPL representative on the Board of Administrators famously declared Kane "our man."³⁹ This victory, however, proved illusory as Kane quickly shifted from apparently progressive leanings to a more conservative orientation. In some ways, Libby, who never wore his politics on his sleeve even in particularly political times, shared Kane's tendency to straddle positions in political debates. His involvement with the Campus War Committee, for example, might have suggested conservative leanings. Conservatives generally touted their patriotism and support for the wars as distinct from members of the NPL who were painted unfairly as unpatriotic and possibly subversive.⁴⁰ Libby's close friendship with J. M. Gillette, however, an active supporter of Progressive causes ranging from Women's Suffrage to the NPL's domestic agenda, marked him out as an individual with liberal tendencies.⁴¹ The obscurity of Libby's political views and seemingly contradictory elements of his behavior limited the support that he received from any one side and left him open to criticism from both.

Finally, Libby's views on University life in some ways reflected older traditions of university administration which preserved an important place for the faculty voice in University affairs.⁴² Kane, on the other hand, like McVey saw the president as the ultimate arbiter of all university life. In this assessment, shared by Geiger in his classic history, the clash between Libby and Kane, while unfortunate for both men, emerged as a key test case in the ongoing process of professionalization of the office of professor at the university. This, as most of my predecessors have observed, is another aspect of the significant contributions of the Libby to the development of the Department.

³⁹ Geiger, 290.

⁴⁰ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 364-366

⁴¹ Geiger, 300-301.

⁴² For a good discussion of this see Geiger, 276-285.

The initial salvo in the clash between Libby and Kane is typically seen as the president's mismanagement of the Influenza Epidemic on campus in 1918. In fact, as Iseminger observed, the clash between Libby and Kane might date even earlier to the president's inaugural address in which Kane, among other things, offered a thinly veiled criticism of Libby's close friend Gillette's handling of a disciplinary case against a fraternity.⁴³ Such strangely impolitic statements, which nevertheless clearly sought to establish the pre-eminent position of the president on campus as the final arbiter of university affairs, came to characterize Kane's term as President and predictably clashed with the equally blunt Libby. In the aftermath of the influenza epidemic in which 20 trainees stationed at the University died, Libby emerged as the spokesman for a group of faculty who blamed Kane for the tragedy. In 1920, Libby along with four others – including Gillette and E. Ladd – composed a 12 page memo entitled “Memoranda of the Unfortunate Happenings at the University of North Dakota.” This document blasted President Kane as unsuitable for the office of president and established the basis for their call later that year that Kane be dismissed by the Board of Regents. As word of the memorandum and Kane's endangered presidency became known, the controversy escalated drawing in students, the press, and members of the Board of Regents. In fact, the ruckus had a seriously disruptive effect on campus as the student body took the President's side and organized campus-wide protests. Such public demonstrations perhaps motivated all parties to come to the table. Ultimately Libby and his faction negotiated a secret deal with Kane brokered by three members of the Board of Trustees George Totten, R. T. Muir, who were NPL members and appeared to be more or less in sympathy with Libby and his group, and John Hagan. This agreement became known as the “Hagan Agreement.” Its contents like the “Memoranda of the Unfortunate Happenings” seem to have been lost, but nevertheless appear to have established the basis for a functional, if not to say peaceful, relationship between Libby's faction and President Kane. While the details of this controversy have little direct bearing on the history of the Department, the content of the Hagan Agreement framed the relationship between Libby and Kane, and its artificial or negotiated nature provided only the thinnest coating of formal niceties sufficient to obscure their deep animosity.

⁴³ T. Kane, “The Installation Address of the President of the University of North Dakota,” *School and Society* 8 (1918), 127.

The second clash with President Kane erupted only a month after the Hagan Agreement came to pass in 1920.⁴⁴ The central point of the controversy regarded the proper procedure for expanding the history department. From the days of McVey, Libby had sought to expand the department by either adding faculty which only occasionally exceeded Libby and a part-time instructor like R. Davies. Since 1916 Libby's requests for additional faculty had become all the more urgent, as the University required that all students take a semester of History and this taxed the limited faculty resources in the department. In the Spring 1920 Libby became interested in hiring a certain Robert R. Russell who had been teaching at Ottawa University in Kansas. At the time, Russell only held an M.A. completed at the University of Kansas under Carl Becker and F. H. Hodder, but he was enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois. Libby regarded Russell as having sufficient teaching experience and, perhaps more importantly, once he had completed his Ph.D. he could earn promotion to full professor and serve alongside Libby as the Professor of European History.

After meeting with Russell in Minneapolis for what appears to have been an impromptu interview, Libby forwarded a letter to Kane recommending that the University hire Russell. Kane responded that he did not see any need to hire Russell at present because the classes were being taught by John W. Taylor. If there was to be a faculty change, Kane would require some justification from Libby to dismiss Taylor and hire someone new. At the same time, Kane contacted Russell and inquired to his qualifications for the job. In response to Kane's request, Libby provided a detailed argument regarding the need to hire Russell and a careful enumeration of his qualifications. Kane in possession of Libby's recommendation of Russell, regarded this as avoiding the larger question of whether Taylor should be dismissed. Moreover, he criticized Libby's plan to expand the department suggesting that the candidate he favored, Russell, was in fact no more qualified than Taylor who Libby evidently deemed inadequate. Kane, perhaps posturing here, suggested that the department would benefit by hiring a "full fledged man" rather than relying on Taylor or Russell. Moreover, before any change could be made Kane insisted again that Libby provide evidence for Taylor's competence (or lack there of) in the classrooms of the Department of History. Libby steadfastly refused to do this, and this evidently was the

⁴⁴ The most complete collection of correspondence regarding this controversy is from the T. Kane Papers Collection OGL #41, Box 1, Folder 8. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

sine qua non for any further action. For Kane, Libby's inability to provide grounds for Taylor's dismissal invalidated Libby's recommendation that the university hire Russell.

As this conversation gradually escalated, Kane kept Russell informed of the issues at stake with the appointment of Taylor and the behavior of Libby providing the unsuspecting candidate with quite an insight into the workings of both the department and the administration of the university. Libby, who had become increasingly impatient with what he saw as Kane's stalling tactics, finally referred the matter to the Board of Administration. The board in this instance sided with Kane who in turn created a separate Department of European History and hired Clarence Perkins as a full professor to be the chair of this department. He had been an Associate Professor at Ohio State University and received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1908.

The second round of the Kane-Libby controversy, much like the first, reflected the growing pains of the University as new and old faculty and administrators sought to accommodate their personal ideas of how a university should function with growing body of professional standards. Libby, for his part, arrived at the University with sterling professional credentials, a willingness to be active in University life, and an expectation that the faculty's views be respected in the running of the University. Moreover, he reinforced this view of faculty's place on campus through such as activities as founding a Grand Forks branch of the American Association of University Professors.⁴⁵ Nevertheless and perhaps ironically, Libby's behavior often seemed to represent more traditional approaches to academic life. It seems likely that Libby's preference for an individual like Russell who would have been quite junior in status to Libby, would have ensured his continued control over departmental affairs. Kane's choice, Perkins' held qualifications that were certainly more significant than either Taylor or Russell, suggesting that Kane, for all his faults, sought to hire a more substantial scholar than Libby's choice. In a sense, then, Kane's view of the development of the department was perhaps more in keeping with later standards, and Libby, or so it would seem, sought to rely on older models of academic practices more dependent on personal acquaintances and a hierarchy based on seniority and professional prestige. Furthermore, Libby's willingness to move Taylor aside without being willing (or perhaps able) to articulate a reason contrasted with Kane's willingness to support Taylor's appointment. Kane's perspective in this matter was consistent with his ideas of faculty

⁴⁵ Geiger, 280.

promotion articulated in his inaugural address.⁴⁶ Kane professed his unwillingness to dismiss a successful member of the faculty without clear reasons. In this sentiment, Kane clearly meant to state his willingness to protect faculty from the arbitrary dismissals that characterized the tumultuous wartime years when some faculty, like Libby's friend William Schaper at the University of Minnesota had lost their positions due to academic, political, or personal animosities.⁴⁷

The final clash between Kane and Libby occurred in 1922. The conflicted and confused discourse evident in both Libby's and Kane's ideas of professional propriety was again apparent when Kane attempted to force into retirement Libby, as well as two other members of the faculty who in a broad sense tended to side with Libby in the tumultuous university politics of the day. In a letter dated to May 4, 1922, Kane outlined his grievances against Libby.⁴⁸ Kane accused Libby of being erratic as a teacher and as an administrator. For Kane this reflected a general "vacillating" attitude that manifest itself in Libby's shift from being a "patrioteer" during the war to a supporter of the NPL once they had come to power. In fact, Kane alleged that Libby's political leanings led him to be a member of "one of the most radical organizations in the state" which apparently had only nine members. Kane also leveled that Libby frequently interfered with the running of the university including violating the so-called Hagan Agreement of 1920 by contacting George Totten, a member of the Board of Administrators over the course of the Taylor controversy the previous year. In light of these charges, Kane recommended that Libby retire. Libby having no desire to retire asked that President Kane to follow the University Constitution by bringing the matter before a special Committee of the University Council who would then offer their recommendations to the State Board of Administration. Kane agreed to this, but noted that he did not consider the University Constitution a binding document as it had not been approved by the present Board of Administration.

For this meeting Libby prepared a point-by-point response to Kane's charges in a letter to the committee of the University Council pointing out that many of the charges against him were unfounded, lacked evidence, or preceded the so-called Hagan agreement which stipulated the slate be wiped clean. Despite a rhetorically thorough refutation of Kane's position, the Committee of the University Council submitted the recommendation that Kane and the three

⁴⁶ T. Kane, "The Installation Address," 130-131.

⁴⁷ J. Gray, *The University of Minnesota: 1851-1951*. (Minneapolis 1951), 247-249.

⁴⁸ In these matters the Libby Papers provide a better guide: Collection OGL #49, Box 9, folders 36-46.

faculty members could not work together and that the three faculty members, including Libby should retire. The Board of Administration after considering the report of the committee agreed with its recommendations. It was only a later injunction by the Board of Administrators that saved Libby's career at the University.

The final major clash between Kane and Libby shares many characteristics of the earlier conflicts. These controversies show a number of important aspects regarding the growth and development of the university as an institution. First, as much as Libby reflected the new wave of professional academics at the University, his view of the role of faculty in University governance and life developed under President Merrifield who presided over a far more intimate institution in which faculty had come to expect much greater influence. Kane, in contrast, held the clear idea that the university president had the authority to oust an individual or force him to retire. In Kane's view, the position of the faculty was largely a concern of the administration who would have the final say in hiring as well as firing individual faculty members. Grounds for dismissal need not be gross negligence, but could be tied to being a good citizen – not being part of radical political groups or being a “Patrioteer” or being vacillating and wavering. The deep rifts cut in North Dakota society by the contentious politics of the day had created seemingly accepted political pretenses for dismissing or at least challenging the position of an individual in the University. While Libby's relationship with Kane over the next decade is difficult to ascertain, there seems to have been a mutual *détente* which allowed Libby not only to carry on his responsibilities as the head of the Department of American History but to expand its faculty and offerings.

The Twenties

The split of the Department of History into two discrete departments was not necessarily a setback from the department. The twin departments – the Department of American History and the Department of European History – had twice the faculty and could offer with both an accomplished Americanist and Europeanist and twice the number of courses. Moreover, maintaining two departments required a greater commitment from the administration as both requested additional faculty, library resources, and improved classrooms. The ability of Perkins, in particular, to attract students ensured that enrolment in the history courses more than doubled,

and this clearly contributed to gradual expansion of both departments during even the most difficult years in the history of the University.

Despite his nearly 20 year career at the University, Clarence Perkins remains an ill-defined figure in the history of the discipline at UND. Despite being overshadowed by his more charismatic and cantankerous colleague, Libby, Perkins played a key role in the expansion and development of the discipline. Trained at Harvard, he had taught at Ohio State University from 1909-1920 when he was wooed to the University by President Kane. Affable, jolly, generous, and prone to gossip, there is no evidence that he and the more taciturn Libby got on well.⁴⁹ His specialty was medieval and modern English History, with prominent articles on the Knights Templar in both the *American Historical Review* (1910) and in the *English Historical Review* (1909, 1910, 1930) but like scholars of an earlier era he was qualified to teach in almost any European field from Ancient to current affairs.⁵⁰ During the 1920s, he demonstrated his wide ranging competences in publishing a well-regarded high school textbook, *The History of European Peoples* published by Rand, McNally, and Company in Chicago and stretching to nearly 1000 pages, as well as several study guides for the Ohio State Bookstore in Columbus.⁵¹ These and other books provided him with some income.⁵² Throughout his career at UND he was a successful teacher and scholar spending time away doing research both in Europe and at major American universities like the University of Texas.

Courses and Students

Perkins arrival was fortuitous in that it coincided with growing interest in European affairs stemming from American involvement in the First World War. His first year teaching produced a massive jump in enrolment in history classes. His courses outperformed Libby's American history classes and, in contrast to later periods, European history consistently out-enrolled American history for the next decade. Some of the initial increase in enrolment can surely be attributed to Libby's reputation as an uncompromising and rigorous instructor and the

⁴⁹ Robinson, *A Professor's Story: An Autobiography*, 184; For the fullest description of Perkins see: Interview with Robert Wilkins Interviewed by John Davenport, January 23, 1976 Collection OGL #1213, Box 2, File 6 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, 1-9.

⁵⁰ C. Perkins, "The Trial of the Knights Templars in England," *EHR* 24 (1909), 432-447; --, "The Knights Templars in the British Isles," *EHR* 25 (1910), 209-230; --, "The Wealth of the Knights Templars in England and the Disposition of it after their Dissolution," *AHR* 5 (1910), 242-63--, "The Knights Hospitallers in England after the Fall of the Order of the Temple" *EHR* 45 (1930), 285-289.

⁵¹ C. Perkins, *A History of European Peoples*. (Chicago 1927)

damage that his reputation sustained during the prolonged wrangling with the administration. Over the course of the decade, however, the impressive enrollment in European history should mainly be credited to the expanding interest in European history, the slightly larger European history department, and the lack of graduate education in European history freeing their faculty from teaching low enrollment graduate level seminars. Perhaps more instructive is the increase of enrolment in both Departments at a rate that outperformed the expanding student body at the University. While it is difficult to compare figures, it is nevertheless remarkable that enrolment in history courses expanded from 294 in 1919 to 1,424 in 1931-1932.

The twin departments and expanded faculty changed the complexion of the offerings in History. While the traditional emphasis on Constitutional and Institutional history remained, the new faculty and changing interests in the nation led to the emergence through the 1920s of courses on new regions such as Scandinavia, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Near East, and the Far East. Libby's American History Department continued to offer both advanced undergraduate and graduate level seminars. Moreover, Perkins shared Libby's civic mindedness and like his colleague in American History took "especially pains to bring our history down fully to the present time so that students will see the connections between the past and present conditions in Europe. When a cabinet falls or a strike is called, we expect our students to have the knowledge to interpret and understand these events" Perkins' faculty managed to offer such a wide range of classes, in part, by varying the number of credits according to the number of hours that the course met. The European History Department was particularly clever in offering a number of 2 and 3 credit courses such as Greek History or the History of Scandinavian Peoples as well as more intensive 4 or 6 credit course. This allowed European history not only to offer more courses, but also to enhance their enrolment numbers without necessarily expanding their staff. Perkins, however, constantly reminded President Kane in his annual reports that this technique allowed for substantial coverage, but did not permit the kind of in-depth study that a fuller faculty would allow. Despite the limitations on faculty, the two departments of the 1920s presented perhaps the most cosmopolitan slate of courses to be offered in the department of history to that time.

While it is difficult to evaluate the impact of this expanded slate of classes on graduates, it must have enabled many of them to communicate effectively with the large immigrant

⁵² Geiger, 349.

communities present in the state.⁵³ This would have been particularly important for the many students of the department who during the 1920s and 1930s went on to teach in public schools state. Perkins in the 1926-1928 annual report noted that 18 students in the School of Education were also taking classes in European History. Graduate education went on during this time, albeit at a slower pace than in the first years of the century. Libby did produce several significant graduates such as Elmer Ellis.⁵⁴ After spending a year at Fargo College, a small Congregationalist school, Ellis transferred to UND in 1922. For his B.A., he focused on History, with Libby, and Education, with Joseph Kennedy. He then went on to pursue his M.A. with Libby in 1925. He briefly taught at North Dakota State Teachers College (now Mayville State) before earning his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1930 where Libby served as a visiting examiner alongside a prominent UND alumnus on the Iowa faculty, George R. Davies. With his Ph.D. in hand the University sought to attract him back to teach history, but, according to his biographer, “Although he serious considered returning to his alma mater, he decided otherwise after the president of that institution [Kane] reluctantly advised him to take an assistant professorship at the University of Missouri which promised greater opportunity for advancement.”⁵⁵ Ellis served the University of Missouri both as a professor in the Department of History, and as an administrator including from 1955-1966 as President of the University. Louis Geiger, who taught in the Department of History at UND from 1949-1960 and penned the best history of the UND, was one of Ellis’s students at Missouri. Today, Ellis’s service to the school is commemorated by the Elmer Ellis library at the main campus in Columbia. Another example of the prestigious alumni produced in the interwar years is Earl Hayter. Hayter received his M.A. in 1931 and later earned his Ph.D. from Northwestern before going on to a successful teaching career at Northern Illinois University. He is responsible for the *Education in Transition*, a history of the University of Northern Illinois and his name graced the UNI Regional History Center.

Faculty

⁵³ Robinson, *History of North Dakota*, 280-288.

⁵⁴ Gilbert C. Fite, “The Career of Elmer Ellis,” in *Elmer Ellis: Teacher Scholar and Administrator*. University of Missouri, (Columbia 1961), 1-28.

⁵⁵ Fite, “The Career of Elmer Ellis,” 27.

The boom in enrolment during the interwar years was primarily a result of the increase in faculty. Since the two departments did not regularly share faculty, they were both able to request additional resources, and despite Kane's difficult reputation, he did endeavor to expand the number of faculty in many programs at the University. In the early 1920s, it appears that Perkins and his European History received more resources and faculty than Libby's American History department. Perkins's who had far less baggage than Libby with the administration took time to cultivate good relations with the Kane administration. This better relationship enabled him to hire good quality faculty throughout the 1920s like Claudius Johnson (Ph.D. Chicago in 1927) in 1921, Albert Hyma (Ph.D. Michigan 1922) and Fletcher Brown in 1922, and Clyde Ferrel (Ph.D. Wisconsin) in 1923. In the later 1920s, Perkins' department hired Phillip Green (Ph.D. Chicago) and Donald Nicholson (Ph.D. Wisconsin). American history briefly shared the services of Hyma and added G. P. Hammond (Ph.D. California) and eventually Felix Vondracek (Ph.D. Columbia) in the later 1920s. Vondracek would go on to teach in the Department for many years. The new, typically temporary faculty of the early 1920s tended to be relatively well qualified, often hailing from large Midwestern schools like Ohio State, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Chicago. Libby and Perkins often relied on personal connections with colleagues to find capable professors for their departments. Wilkins opined that Perkins sought candidates who were likely to be comfortable at the University and over time became less inclined to ask the advice of colleagues at more established East Coast institutions.⁵⁶ Despite the relatively good credentials held by many of the faculty members of the 1920s, their appointments in the Departments did not necessarily coincide with their increasingly specialized training. For example, Felix Vondracek, a specialist in Central European history found himself teaching the Survey of American history in the American history department; Phillip Green, in contrast, a specialist in American history, primarily taught European history in Perkins' European History Department. Notwithstanding the odd assignments, the faculty of both Departments tended to be productive with not only Libby and Perkins producing books and articles, but also many of the temporary members as

⁵⁶ Robert Wilkins Interviewed by John Davenport, January 23, 1976 Collection OGL #1213, Box 2, Folder 6 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, p. 5 suggests that Perkins may have been particularly concerned that Jewish faculty members would not be comfortable in Grand Forks. Wilkins elaborated only a little further to say that this might be because Perkins was anti-Semitic or that he, himself, was, in fact Jewish (although his denomination of record in the University files was Episcopalian).

well. Perkins, in particular, took pains to note the accomplishments of his faculty in his annual reports to the president.⁵⁷

Perkins was, nevertheless, particularly concerned with the difficulty in retaining qualified faculty, a problem characteristic of the university as a whole and reflected in the Departments of History. Geiger considered “the chief cause of the turnover was the uneasy relations between the president and the faculty.”⁵⁸ It is unsurprising that this particular factor does not appear in the Departmental reports to the President. Perkins stressed in his reports throughout the 1920s that the pay for faculty was too low, if the University hoped to compete with Eastern colleges which regularly paid as much as 50% more than UND.⁵⁹ In practice, it was not just eastern universities that hired away qualified faculty from UND; G. P. Hammond, for example, was hired to teach Latin American History at the University of Arizona. A. Hyma moved on to teach at the University of Michigan. The willingness of faculty to move on for better financial and professional opportunities surely reflects the growing professionalization of the discipline which may have weakened faculty ties to specific universities and strengthened their ties to the discipline or even their own careers. Despite these changes, by the late 1920s and early 1930s there was sufficient continuity that Green and Nicholson, for example, had been promoted from Instructors to Assistant Professors presumably on the completion of their Ph.D.s. Full-time faculty appointments with correspondingly improved pay undoubtedly contributed to Nicholson staying at UND for over 10 years, Green for close to twenty and Vondracek for much longer.

The depression of the 1920s in North Dakota played an important role in the low level of salaries and the limited resources available to departments.⁶⁰ Perkins and Libby both regularly noted the lack of material in the library and the lack of journals, magazine, and newspapers for the seminar room. Perkins optimistically begged the administration to invest \$1000 a year for books on European history in the library.⁶¹ Libby continued to ask for better maps and lantern slides for his seminar rooms and in the late 1920s began discuss the building of a history museum. It seems that some of these requests were honored and other cases they were ignored.

⁵⁷ This is contra Geiger, 351, who argues for the declining productivity of the Kane faculty based on the number of books that they produced per year. While this may be some indication, it does not seem, at least in the field of history, to reflect adequately the performance of the department.

⁵⁸ Geiger, 344-345.

⁵⁹ Department of European History Report of the Departments to the President 1924-1926, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

⁶⁰ Robinson, 371-395; Geiger, 343-345.

The greatest boon to the department during was the erection of Merrifield Hall which opened in 1930. Designed by Joseph Bell DeRemer, a well-known architect, its blend of Art Deco and College Gothic style has made it a landmark building on campus and an attractive, if sometimes ill-fitting home of the department for over 75 years.

The Thirties

The 1930s were a difficult and ultimately transformative time for the University and the Department. The uneven fortunes of the state throughout the 1920s, however, ironically softened the blow of the depression at first as the University already existed in an economizing mode. Nevertheless, by 1933, the University began to make very difficult decisions as the amount appropriated to the university could not actually be met from nearly empty state coffers.⁶² Kane determined that it would be necessary to terminate some faculty.⁶³ Moreover, in 1933 the administration discontinued some of its publications, in particular the *Quarterly Journal* which had been published for many years from the University; the state discontinued *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* (the successor of the *Collections of the North Dakota Historical Society*) that year as well cutting off another key outlet for scholarship. Another dramatic peripheral effect of the worsening depression in the 1930s was the resignation of President Kane. While many had suspected that Kane was to retire in 1933 at his seventieth birthday, Kane hoped that his resignation in 1933 amidst the controversy and difficulties facing the University's appropriations might secure a more favorable treatment for the university among the state's lawmakers.⁶⁴

John C. West replaced Kane as university President. He was the Superintendent of Grand Forks' City School and had received his Ph.D. under John M. Gillette in the Department of Sociology. Apparently, when Kane announced that he would resign, the state sought Gillette for the office of President of the University. Gillette declined the offer, but met with a group of faculty who had met regularly to discuss concerns regarding the university administration. Libby, who continued to garner some respect particularly among his senior colleagues, along

⁶¹ Department of European History Report of the Departments to the President 1923-1924. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

⁶² Geiger, 376.

⁶³ Geiger, 375-378. This, as many things in President Kane's tumultuous presidency, was not accomplished without controversy.

⁶⁴ Geiger, 376.

with Dr. Simpson, and Dr. Wheeler from Biology, were members of this group and they discussed the various potential candidates. This group failed to decide upon a suitable candidate, but they did, in general, support Gillette's judgment when he recommended his former student West for the post.

Unlike Kane, West considered himself a politician who sought to bring together factions within the faculty and make the university more popular with the state in general.⁶⁵ Continuing a trajectory initiated by the McVey hiring in 1909 and then Kane, West represented the most administratively adept of the presidents of the University of North Dakota. In fact, bore very little in the way of academic qualifications, with the exception of a Ph.D., and came from an almost purely administrative background of the state's public schools. Consequently, some faculty felt that he tended to have closer ties to faculty who had experience in the public schools than faculty with traditional academic backgrounds.⁶⁶ The lack of close ties with all members of the faculty, however, did not undermine West's ability to guide the university through the difficult times of the 1930s. West's political maneuvers in the 1930s did much to improve University's meager funding allocation. He sought federal funds to help students attend the university and actively courted such programs as the WPA and CCC to assist with university upkeep.

Despite West's well-meaning efforts, salaries were slashed and many of the faculty member who sought employment elsewhere as a result. The excessively low salaries exacerbated the revolving door of both departments of history course of the 1930s.⁶⁷ An instructor or even Assistant Professor was unlikely to earn over \$2000 a year. Salaries from the mid-1930s through the early 1940s stood below the levels at the turn of the century, and while jobs were scarce throughout the U.S. many of the better qualified junior faculty were able to obtain positions elsewhere. Perkins understood this reality, and admitted as much to President West in a letter when he conceded "I believe it is far better to get men good enough to move and have them stay only two or three years here than to land mediocrities who stay indefinitely."⁶⁸ In the European History department, Nicholson left in 1935, Reginald Lovell the same year for Willamette College in Oregon, Clarence Matterson in 1939 left for Iowa State University at

⁶⁵ Geiger, 380-384; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 177.

⁶⁶ Geiger, 380-384; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 177.

⁶⁷ Geiger 392.

Ames where he would eventually become department head, Charles Morely left for Ohio State in 1942. In the American History department, John Pritchett soon after being promoted to Associate Professor left for Vassar College in 1935 and Charles Centner in 1941 for Tulane. Robinson in his autobiography referred to these people as “only camping.”⁶⁹

It is perhaps a testimony to the importance and popularity of history as discipline that many of the vacated positions were filled quickly. Pritchett’s resignation, for example, opened a position on the faculty that Libby filled with Elwyn B. Robinson. Libby had contacted Robinson’s advisor Arthur C. Cole at Western Reserve University with whom Libby had worked on the Mississippi Valley Historical Review. Cole suggested Elwyn Robinson would be a suitable candidate for the vacancy in his Department of American History. Robinson contacted Libby in early August of 1935 and by mid August he was on his way to Grand Forks. Robinson became a fixture in the department of history for over 35 years and influenced by Libby’s example, published *The History of North Dakota*, which remains the standard history of the state. The Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections stands as a testimony to his service to the University.

The Later Years of Libby and Perkins

Despite Robinson’s later prominence, the two history Departments of the 1930s and early 1940s remained dominated by Perkins and Libby. Libby continued to teach most of the upper division courses and the occasional survey. Moreover, he had worked to ensure that other departments like sociology and School of Commerce required American history classes. This helped enrolment numbers stay stable in the 1930s even as total enrollment in the university declined. Robinson, nevertheless, was critical of Libby’s teaching. He viewed the texts that Libby employed to be outdated and intimated that Libby continued to use them simply because they reflected his views. Moreover, Robinson thought that Libby’s “question-and-answer” technique of teaching was better suited for high-schools than for college. Robinson sought to encourage more extensive reading by his classes, even at the survey level, and to create a more natural and fluid atmosphere in class which student presentations, lectures, and discussions. Libby, for his steadfast commitment to his own method of teaching, did nothing to prevent

⁶⁸ C. Perkins to John C. West, July 1, 1944. President’s Papers. Clarence Perkins File. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

⁶⁹ Robinson, *Professor’s Life*, 164.

Robinson from transforming the survey classes to incorporate both new techniques and newer scholarship.

Libby remained active in his efforts collect material for the history of the state. During the Depression, he drew upon the resources made available by such federal programs as the WPA to fund an ambitious project to use unemployed “white collar” workers to gather historical information from the many living 19th and early 20th century settlers who continued to live throughout the state.⁷⁰ The project was managed by Russell Reid, the superintendent of the State Historical Society, Libby, its longtime secretary, and Edward A. Milligan (a former student of Libby’s at the University). Libby and his colleagues at numerous field offices gave the individuals employed by the project instructions on collecting data and simple forms to fill out detailing both basic biographical data and stories about the earliest settlers. The project ran from 1936 to 1941 when its funding expired before having completed the survey of every North Dakota country. Nevertheless a considerable reservoir of material was collected and deposited into the storerooms at the State Historical Society in Bismarck. In the end, the data collected was uneven rendering results that were perhaps not as impressive as the organizers hoped owing in large part to the lack of qualifications and aptitude among the men on the work-relief rolls in North Dakota. The work of Libby on this project does emphasize the continued activity of the department in the development of formal historical research in the state. Moreover, Libby efforts to continue to work of both the department and the Historical Society even during the most difficult days of the Depression reflected his commitment to his research and historical study in the state.

By the 1930s, Libby’s scholarship, however, began show the strains of time. An effort to write a college level history textbook met with what must have been a disappointment Libby’s American history textbook suffered harsh criticism at the hands of reviewers at various presses who considered it out of date in both argument and presentation.⁷¹ The work was never published. His two major scholarly outlets, the *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* and the *Quarterly Journal* had been discontinued for budgetary reasons in the 1930s. He struggled to get his work on topics other than North Dakota history to press. *The Mississippi Valley Historical*

⁷⁰ This discussion derives entirely from: G. Iseminger, “The Historical Data Project in North Dakota, 1936-1941,” *North Dakota History* 62.1 (1995), 13-28.

⁷¹ Letter to Seba Eldridge from Anonymous Reviewer, January 19, 1931. Libby Papers OGL #49, Box 1, File 5. The reviewer made numerous criticisms of the books “antiquated” nature.

Review rejected a major article on “The Technic of the American Revolution” forcing Libby to send it to *The United States Law Review*, a journal far less suitable for the topic.⁷² It is a testimony to Libby persistence and diligence that as late as 1941 Libby was applying for a Guggenheim Fellowship to continue work on his doctoral thesis on the geographical distribution of votes in the colonial period.⁷³ Libby’s standing in national professional organizations, like the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, had declined as well owing in large part to the rise of a new generation of professionally trained scholars.

When Robinson was hired in 1935 Libby met him at the bus station and assisted him in finding an apartment affordable on his meager salary. Libby also showed genuine interest in Robinson as an individual in their initial correspondence inquiring as to his marital status and denominational preferences. Robinson also makes clear, however, that Libby’s standing among his colleagues had declined by the late 1930s. While in the early 1930s his friendship with John Gillette made him a significant player in the selection of a new President, by the later 1930s “Libby’s voice was not an influential one in meetings of the faculty.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Libby remained active on faculty committees into the 1940s.⁷⁵ One could imagine how Libby’s stiff, formal style and his strong opinions regarding his colleagues would make him a difficult man to work with, but his willingness to pursue university service set him apart from many of his colleagues.

In contrast, the affable and “jolly” Perkins seems never to become fully engaged in University affairs as Libby had in the first decades of the century. From the correspondence in his file in the President’s Papers, it is clear that he had a close relationship with President West, and the several short and collegial letters intimated that he offered assistance with various university matters. Perkins did not, however, get along with Dean William Bek, the long serving dean of the College of Liberal Arts (later the College of Science, Literature, and Arts). Among students, he was a popular teacher, whom Robinson argued sought to entertain as much as educate. Throughout the 1930s he continued to publish significant textbooks like *Man’s*

⁷² O. G. Libby, ““The Technic of the American Revolution,” *The United States Law Review*, 72 (1938), 91-106; Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, p. 140 notes the his advisor Cole at Western Reserve was the editor of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* and was deeply concerned about how Libby would react to the rejection of his article.

⁷³ Application for Guggenheim Fellowship. Libby Papers: OGL# 49, box 1, file 7.

⁷⁴ Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, 140.

⁷⁵ John. C. West Papers, OGL #23, Box 1, File 7. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

Advancing Civilization (1934 and 1937), and *Ancient History* (1936). In 1940 he published *Development of European Civilization* with two former colleagues at UND, Clarence Matterson and Reginald Lovell.⁷⁶ These books provided him and in some cases his colleagues with considerable income during the darkest years of the depression.

Conclusions

From Libby's arrival at the University in the early days of the 20th century to the twin-departments of Libby and Perkins, the men associated with the study of history at the University established the basic character of their discipline. The departments featured individuals of substantial academic credentials who consistently produced sound scholarship, a commitment to the development of history within the state, and the ability to produce a small, but successful group of undergraduate and graduate alumni. Despite these positive trends, this period also saw established several recurring problems for the discipline of history at the University. High turnover of faculty would remain a characteristic feature of the department for years to come. In particular, many, but certainly not all, of the better qualified faculty in the department took advantage of opportunities to move on to better positions at more prestigious and centrally located institutions. The lack of resources would plague the ability of the department to maintain a truly national reputation, and likely contributed to the widespread interest among long term faculty members in the department to cultivate interests in local and state history. While much of this was high quality work, Libby's research, for example while in some cases exceedingly particularistic, built a sound foundation for all subsequent research in North Dakota, it had the effect of removing the members of the department from issues of interest to the broader historical community.

The trends emerging from the department over the course of the first half of the 20th century continue in some form for the next thirty year even after the retirement of Libby in 1945 and Perkins sudden death in 1946. Libby had been on the faculty since 1902 and Perkins since 1920. Both men had guided the split department of history through its best days, during the 1920s, and the tumultuous times in the 1930s and had not only ensured that the department continued to serve the needs of the university and the state, but, in fact, expanded to take a dynamic and nearly modern form.

⁷⁶ Robinson, 184.

Chapter 3

The Department of the '50s and '60s

Introduction

The immediate post-war period saw a number of important changes to the University and to the department of history. The University exuded the spirit of optimism of the immediate post-war period which simultaneously looked ahead to the future and aspired to return the university to the prominence it enjoyed prior the hard times of the 1920s and 1930s. As early as 1944, Dean Bek addressing President West and the faculty could note “The University is coming out of the blight and fog of depression. A new day is dawning. The depression did some terrible things to us... Before the university was hamstrung by insufficient funds it had an enviable reputation among sister institutions...”¹ The optimism expressed by Bek in 1944 was clearly felt in the Department of History. Like Bek, they too looked back at the pre-Depression period as a kind of Golden Age of the Department.² In particular, the Department harkened back to the Libby’s strong leadership both within the department and at the level of cultivating historical study in the state more broadly, as well as his active scholarship. The department was interested in reviving some features of University life that the economic problems of the Depression had discontinued, namely the work Perkins and Libby had accomplished in developing the core of a research library, a regional archive, and the continued expansion of the department. To do this they sought to establish strong relations with both the administration and with a new influence in University affairs, the Alumni Association.

The rapid increase in enrollment experienced in the immediate post war period combined with a period of general economic expansion in the state to improve gradually the resources available to the university and to fuel a period of remarkable change.³ The great boom in enrolment and prosperity experienced in the late 1940s and 1950s stood in particularly marked

¹ “Remarks of Dean W.G. Bek at the Faculty Meeting of the University of September 23, 1944,” Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. William Bek Papers. Collection #120, File 1. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

² UND History Department Faculty - John Parker, Elwyn B. Robinson, Robert Wilkins, and Louis Geiger. Interviewed by John Davenport on October 17, 1975. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. Oral History Interviews Collection. Collection #1213, Box 1, File 7. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. (Hereafter Interview with History Faculty)

contrast to the even the slow improvements experienced in the later 1930s and early 1940s. In fact, the first year of post-war enrolment, 1946 eclipsed by nearly 1,000 students the previous enrolment record at the University of 1,960 students in 1939, and this new expanded student body, composed of many veterans, tended to be older and more apt to be married, but carried the same earnest dedication to their studies.⁴ The benefits derived from the post war boom in enrolment and funding, however, may not have immediately effected the History department; in fact, many members of the Department of History expressed the less than sanguine opinion that the general expansion of the university largely bypassed the department.⁵ While the disparity between well-funded and growing departments and lagging, under-funded departments may have become more apparent, the increased resources on campus did, nevertheless, affect the opportunities available to the university's historians.

Along with an increase in enrolment and funding, the "New Day" at the University saw the departure of several longstanding faculty members. As we have already noted Libby retired in 1945 and Perkins died the next year. Robinson and Vondracek were holdovers from the prewar years and they soon assumed the mantle of leadership in the department. They were soon joined by Louis Geiger and Robert Wilkins, among the last men to be hired by Perkins before his death. Elsewhere on campus, William Bek, the Dean of the College of Science, Literature, and Arts, died in 1948 and John Gillette, the famed sociologist, retired in the same year. The group that stepped up to replace these men, both within the department and within the University, in many cases represented a very different academic culture that the individuals whom they replaced. Hired either immediately before the war or in the later 1940s, this new group of scholars, were typified by men like the historians Louis Geiger and Elwyn Robinson and Robert Bonner Witmer, an engineer turned physicist who replaced William Bek in 1948 and would serve nearly 20 years in that capacity. These men were soon led by a new University president, George Starcher, who replaced John C. West in 1955, and brought new scholarly expectations, achievements, and discipline to play in both individual departments and across the university more broadly. These new expectations often met with resistance from both more conservative

³ For a thorough discussion of this dynamic period see: L. Geiger, *The University of the Northern Plains*. (Grand Forks 1958), 407-454.

⁴ Geiger, 407.

⁵ UND History Department Faculty - John Parker, Elwyn B. Robinson, Robert Wilkins, and Louis Geiger. Interviewed by John Davenport on October 17, 1975. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. Oral History Interviews

elements among the faculty, sometimes referred to as the “Wranglers” and more progressive members, who were known as the “Young Turks”. This resistance to change led sometimes led to a sense of crisis at the University, particular in the 1960s.⁶ The former thought that the university was doing more than it could, while the latter felt that the University must do more.⁷

The changes in the administration were mirrored by changes both the faculty and the identity of the Department. The passing of Libby and Perkin and the arrival of a cadre of new faculty, left a new group of scholars in the position to deal with the opportunities and challenges of this time. This faculty core lasted for much of the 1950s and 1960s and shaped both the development of the department as an institution and a cultural influence in the state.

The dynamism of this period is captured in a rather remarkable array of documents. The most interesting of these documents, perhaps, is Elywn B. Robinson’s unpublished autobiography. Composed apparently in the early 1980s, Robinson details his life from his early years in Ohio to the publication of his magnum opus *The History of North Dakota* in 1966. He drew heavily on his family diary, the material in the Robinson Papers in the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collect, and the reminiscence of his colleagues, particularly Robert Wilkins, and his sons Steve and Gordon. The autobiography is complemented by a series of interviews conducted by John Davenport in the early and mid 1970s. Davenport interviewed Elwyn Robinson and his wife, Eva, members of the Departments of the 1950s and 1960s, and in one extensive interview, Robert Wilkins, who taught in the Department of History from 1945 to 1992. The majority of information in these sources focus on the life of the department in the 1950 and early 1960s. I have supplemented this modestly with interviews with Gordon Iseminger, Playford Thorson, and D. Jerome Tweton, although I have only begun to process much of the content from these interviews. Finally, the departmental reports to the Dean from 1955-1977 came to light in the files of the Department Head and provide basic information on departmental affairs including a enrolment numbers. These reports are far more robust for the 1950s and early 1960s than for

Collection. Collection #1213, Box 1, File 7 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. (Hereafter Interview with the Department)

⁶ Letter of the 25 to George Starcher. January 1965. University Archives. President’s Papers. Collection #43, box 67, file 5. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. A manifesto of sorts for the “Young Turk” movement: “As your recent biennial report suggests, the University faces a period of crisis. The rapidly expanding enrollment, and growing national emphasis on academic excellence means that the quality of education given here must be raised...”

⁷ Interview with P. Thorson by William Caraher, August 14, 2007.

later years. This, perhaps, reflects the awareness of this period as one of particular importance in the development of the department.

Unfortunately, as is typical for the history of the department and the university in general, several major voices go unrepresented in the available material. Felix Vondracek left almost no papers after his retirement from the department in 1971. Vondracek served as department head from 1945 to 1962. Equally, if not more problematic, is the absence of material from Robert B. Witmer who was the Dean of the College of Science, Literature, and Arts. Witmer served as dean from the death of Bek in 1948 until his retirement in the late 1960s and with the growing complexity of the university, played an increasingly important role in the major departmental affairs. The growing complexity of the university with its expanded bureaucracy had made the paper trail larger, more complex, and more dispersed. Consequently, this section will depend more fully, perhaps to a fault, to those limited materials available in the Wilkins and Robinson papers. It is important to note, however, that these substantial and easily accessible collections present only one view of the department.

The Faculty of the 1950s and 1960s

With the death of Perkins in the winter 1946, the reunited department rallied to ensure that his classes were taught in the spring semester. A replacement for his position as department head, although far less onerous post than in the modern, highly-bureaucratized, university, was nevertheless required. Dean Bek designated Felix Vondracek, the senior member of the department, as acting department head. Vondracek was known around campus for his photographic memory and booming voice, which on clear summer days could be heard across the quad.⁸ He had recently returned to the department from his wartime service, which comprised primarily of training cadets at the University. Libby had hired him in 1929 in the Department of American History although at the time he was struggling to complete his Ph.D at Columbia with a dissertation on the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia. He led a department composed of Robert Wilkins, whom Perkins hired on the advice of F. Lee Benns, a fellow Syracuse alumnus and Wilkins's advisor as an undergraduate and M.A. level student at Indiana

⁸ Interview with Robert Wilkins Interviewed by John Davenport, January 23, 1976. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. Oral History Interviews Collection. Collection #1213, Box 2, File 6 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, p. 13. (hereafter Interview with Wilkins)

University. Wilkins replaced Phillip Greene who sought to return to his southern roots by taking a job at Queen's College in Charlotte, North Carolina. Perkins had also hired Louis Geiger, a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri, on the advice of former University of North Dakota history alumnus Elmer Ellis. Robinson, Geiger, and Wilkins all held particularly negative views of Vondracek as both a scholar and a leader of the department. In later accounts they were confident that Dean Bek shared those views, and this explained his resistance to naming Vondracek Department Head in official capacity.⁹ Vondracek's rise to power occurred in the tumultuous years following the retirement of Libby and Perkins. He became acting Department Head over the reluctance of the previous dean and the reservations of the faculty. The retirement of Libby and the death of Perkins had left the department at less than full strength with only four faculty members (Vondracek, Robinson, the newly hired Wilkins and Louis Geiger). Robinson's frail health made him unsuitable and Geiger and Wilkins were newly arrived and lacked the Ph.D. Vondracek only became the official Department Head after the death of Dean Bek in 1948 when Bonner Witmer elevated him to the position.

Almost immediately Robinson, Wilkins, and Geiger had difficulty with Vondracek. Both Wilkins and Robinson saw Vondracek as easily offended, insecure, and absent during most of his term as department head.¹⁰ They criticized his apparent lack of intellectual substance, his failure to provide strong administrative leadership in the department, and his regard for the office of department head as only a means to gain a larger salary. As a typical example of Vondracek's behavior, Wilkins and Robinson both complained that he used his position as department head to monopolize summer teaching in order to supplement his income despite the fact that salaries for junior faculty remained substantially below the national average even amidst post war prosperity.¹¹ Their criticism of Vondracek for this and other matters eventually precipitated personal visits not only to Dean Witmer but also to President West and his successor Starcher.

The consistently vituperative critique of Vondracek by Robinson, Geiger, and others cast a long shadow over Vondracek's term as department head. Their criticisms tended to obscure some key developments in the department during that time which may give credit to

⁹ Interview with Wilkins, 9; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 194-195. Unpublished Manuscript. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. Elwyn B. Robinson Papers. Collection #189, Box 14, file 1 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. (Hereafter Robinson, *A Professor's Story*)

¹⁰ Interview with Wilkins, 9-11; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 194-195, 248-249.

¹¹ Interview with Wilkins, 24; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 235.

Vondracek's leadership. Perhaps the most damning of the criticisms leveled by Robinson is that Vondracek hindered the department's growth from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s during which the university itself expanded markedly. While it is difficult to assess the intensity and commitment with which Vondracek acted, the annual reports of the department from the 1950s to the early 1960s nevertheless show that he regularly requested additional resources for the department including better offices, additional library resources, and even provisions for an archivist for the expanding Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection. The manuscript collection was a pet project of Robinson, Wilkins, and Geiger, none of whom got along well with Vondracek. Moreover, Robinson's and Wilkins's critique obscures the key role that Vondracek played in bringing to the university an ambitious, competent, and active group of young faculty members. At the death of Perkins, the department only registered three faculty members, down from the six members of during the days of the split department. Vondracek worked to increase the number of faculty members steadily during his term as chair. Wilkins begrudgingly notes that Vondracek was either good or very lucky in attracting faculty members to the department, and may have been equally as instrumental in driving them out.¹² It should be noted, however, that one of the byproducts of hiring good and ambitious young faculty is that one is apt to lose some of them on account of their greater access to other opportunities.

While retention continued to be a major concern for the Department, several incoming faculty during the '40s and '50s made a lasting impact on the department and University. By 1948, Vondracek had hired two Missourians, George Lemmer a fellow graduate student of Geiger's at the University of Missouri, and Robert Kirkpatrick who held an M.A. from Washington University, bringing the faculty of the Department back to 5 members. Kirkpatrick earned a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford and departed in 1950 to be replaced by John Parker. Parker was the first native North Dakotan to teach in the Department. He was a graduate student at the University of Michigan and met Felix Vondracek purely by chance at a meeting of the MVHA in Madison, Wisconsin.¹³ According to Parker, he had introduced himself to Vondracek after seeing the University of North Dakota as his affiliation. Vondracek hired him quickly after that. While Parker's training was in European History, he primarily taught U.S. Economic history which was a required course for students in the School of Commerce.

¹² Interview with Wilkins, 43.

¹³ Interview with the Department, 16-17.

The faculty of the early 1950s, however, also proved difficult for Vondracek, and the turnover in faculty fed a period of instability in the department. While his relationship with Robinson and Wilkins was cool at best, he did not get along at all with Lemmer, Geiger, and Parker.¹⁴ At one point, Vondracek famously told Lemmer and Geiger that President West saw them as “dead-wood”.¹⁵ Moreover, he seems to have verbally attacked John Parker for reasons that remain obscure.¹⁶ This increasingly hostile work environment took its toll on the physical health of Parker leading him to resign with an ulcer in 1952. He completed his Ph.D. in library science and served for almost 40 years as the head of the James Ford Bell Library of rare books at the University of Minnesota. Lemmer soon left as well to take a temporary position as a civilian historian with the Air Force. During this time he wrote a letter to Dean Witmer very critical of Felix Vondracek, and this prompted President West to fire Lemmer.¹⁷ Efforts by Robinson, Wilkins, and Dean Witmer to convince Lemmer to write a formal apology and return to the University were unsuccessful. At the same time as Lemmer’s and Parker’s departure, Louis Geiger accepted a position as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Helsinki in Finland and as a Ford Fellow at Harvard University and Stanford University. These departures, both temporary and permanent marked a period of instability and change in both the University and the Department. John Harnsberger, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota, replaced John Parker. Jerry DeWitt, a graduate student at Yale University, replaced Lemmer. Fred Winkler was invited to replace Geiger for his two years of leave. In 1960, Playford Thorson came to the University as a graduate student at the University of Minnesota having earned an M.A. from the University of New Mexico. He would serve for over three decades as the department’s expert in Scandinavian history. The new blood in the department initially calmed the turmoil incited by the conflicts between Lemmer, Parker, and Vondracek. The calm did not persist, however, as soon DeWitt and Harnsberger chafed under Vondracek’s leadership.¹⁸ The record for the end of the 1950s and early years of the 1960s is poor, but it appears to have been a period of growing discontent with the leadership in the department as the early 1960s marked a significant watershed in departmental history.

¹⁴ Felix J. Vondracek’s file in President’s Papers. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

¹⁵ Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, 220.

¹⁶ Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, 247

¹⁷ Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, 248.

¹⁸ Interview with Wilkins, 21; Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, 316.

At the same time, the University itself underwent some marked changes. John C. West retired in 1954 and George Starcher became the President of the University. West's last years were marked by obstinacy, complacency, and infirmity. In contrast, Starcher was an ambitious former dean of Arts and Sciences at Ohio University before his arrival at the University of North Dakota.¹⁹ He brought change to the University and, in particular, drew the university back toward the mainstream of academic developments. West had been an able administrator who had seen the University through some of its toughest times, but in the later years of the administration he had become unduly influence by deeply conservative elements among the faculty who had, in some ways, sought to preserve the pre-war status quo by preventing the academic development of the University. Starcher worked hard to transform the University into a more modern academic institution, taking pains both to accommodate some of the more conservative elements, particularly those espoused by a cadre of conservative faculty known as the Wranglers, while at the same time making substantial changes to the expectations, administration, and organization of the University. One of the most significant changes that Starcher made was the creation in 1962 of the post of Vice President of Academic Affairs, which he filled with William Koenker, who had previously been chair of the Economics Department.

Robinson, Geiger, and others complained to Starcher, Witmer, and ultimately Koenker about Vondracek's lack of leadership in the department. While initially there was no response, eventually the departure of DeWitt, Harnsberger, Wilkins, and Geiger during the early 1960s drew administration's attention to the department. Robinson opined that these departures in the context of the constant complaints regarding Vondracek's leadership forced the administrations hand in 1962. The complaints of faculty may have been the proximate cause for the ouster of Vondracek, but Starcher had been inclining toward a policy of rotating department heads.²⁰ Several long serving department heads like Libby's old friend George Wheeler, had resisted this policy. These men typically expected to hold their positions for life, but over time nearly all of the old guard were replaced. The policy of Starcher, while immediately beneficial to an embattled department like history, was part of the gradual expansion of administrative power at the University largely at the expense of the faculty. Ousting long standing department heads and replacing them with rotating faculty limited the ability of faculty groups, like the Wranglers, to

¹⁹ E. B. Robinson, "The Starcher Years: The University of North Dakota, 1954-1971," *The North Dakota Quarterly* 39.2 (1971), 5-8.

²⁰ Robinson, "The Starcher Years," 26; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 367.

develop sustainable power bases and shifted some of the responsibility for continuity of policy to the administrative level. In the Department of History, a petition submitted to Starcher by Thorson, an emerging member of the so-called “Young Turks”, and endorsed by five of the members of the department led to the ouster of Vondracek’s. The next year, Starcher tried to offer the department head to Thorson, who refused, and Robinson briefly assumed the post until his chronic health issues led him to resign after less than a year.²¹ Glenn Smith, a newcomer to the department hired in 1962, followed him as chair.

The first years of the 1960s, however, did not see an immediate change in the department’s fortunes. The department continued simply to focus upon replacing departed faculty. In 1962, the department hired Glenn Smith, a doctoral candidate at Iowa State, who was teaching at the University of Idaho-Lewiston. The department also brought in a cadre of scholars with ties to the University of Oklahoma. In 1962, Gordon Iseminger, a doctoral candidate at the University of Oklahoma, came to the department to replace Alexander Ospovat who departed for Oklahoma State University. Iseminger had come to the attention of the department through its relationship to Gilbert Fite at the University of Oklahoma. Fite was a longstanding friend of the department and the relationship between various faculty members and Fite influenced the character of the department through several significant faculty hires. Fite have been a colleague of Louis Geiger at the University of Missouri and through their acquaintance had arranged for Robert Wilkins to go to Oklahoma over the 1962-1963 academic year as a replacement for Fite. Later, in 1965, Jerry Tweton would come to teach in the Department having received his Ph.D. under Fite at Oklahoma. In the same year, Oklahoma ties attracted Gerald Lawrence a Ph.D. candidate at Oklahoma, to the department. He would complete his Ph.D. in 1968 and move into the administration as the Coordinator of Humanities while continuing to teach some courses in the department.

The group of faculty hired in the second half of the 1960s worked to produce a remarkable change in the department. Some of this transformation must be credited to the leadership of D. Jerome Tweton. Tweton had earned an M.A. at the University and was a Grand Forks native. He was hired by the department as chair from Dana College in Nebraska and would continue in that position for over 25 years. Soon after he arrived, he established a good relationship with William Koenker, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and he convinced

²¹ Interview with P. Thorson by William Caraher. August 14, 2007. Robinson, *A Professor’s Story*, 367.

Koenker of the need to expand the size and offerings of the department.²² In particular, he sought to bring specialized scholars in to teach classes previous taught by generalists in the department. For example, he brought in Charles Carter, a Ph.D. from Chicago and an expert in Hittite and Akkadian texts to teach ancient history on campus. Ancient History, since the time of Perkins and Libby, had been taught by people without traditional training in the field. They also hired Sinclair Snow, who had received his M.A. in the Department before going on to earn his Ph.D. from Virginia to teach among other things Latin American History.²³ In 1967, Tweton and the department induced Robert Wilkins to return from teaching at Marshall University in his native West Virginia, and he was joined by Stanley Murray, who moved north from North Dakota State (Ph.D. Wisconsin) and John Merring (Ph.D. Missouri). While the Merring and Snow would depart a scant two years later, they were both replaced: the former by Thomas Howard (Ph.D. Indiana) and the latter by John Hart (Ph.D. UCLA). Gerald Lawrence came to the University the same year to teach part time in the department of history and serve as the Coordinator of Humanities. This dual role for faculty represented another way that Tweton and the department were able to get new faculty positions without necessarily establishing new lines. A few years later, the practice would be repeated with the hiring of Dan Rylance, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Missouri, as the university archivist and assistant professor in the department of history. The creativity and persistence of the department in attracting new faculty marked a shift in the department's fortunes. No longer were they focused exclusively on stemming the tide of faculty attrition in the department, but could work to initiate a remarkable period of expansion. By 1970, the traditional six member department of the interwar years had become a department of 12. The new faculty of the 1960s, on the one hand, shared many of the characteristics of the faculty of the 1950s: they were well-qualified products of the best universities in the Midwest and West and were active as both scholars and teachers. On the other hand, they were as a group more inclined toward publishing and more focused in their expertise and training. They also, with a few exceptions remained at the University longer. The core group of faculty hired in the 1960s, Thorson, Smith, Iseminger, Tweton, Carter, Howard, Murray

²² Interview with D. Jerome Tweton by William Caraher. August 15, 2007.

²³ For Carter see: "Charles Carter 1928-1988," *Proceedings of the Linguistic Circle of Manitoba and North Dakota* 27 (1987), 2. Yoël L. Arbeitman, *The Asia Minor Connexion: Studies on the Pre-Greek Languages in Memory of Charles Carter* (Leuven, 2000), ix-xii.

and the rehired Wilkins, stayed in the department into the 1980s, 1990s, or in some cases even later.

While the faculty hired in the middle and late 1960s managed, to a certain extent, to stem the tide of departures from the department, the persistent turn over of faculty during two previous decades remains a striking feature in the annals of the department. Robinson and Wilkins attributed the persistent turnover of faculty in the department to Vondracek's difficult personality. The persistent turn-over in faculty throughout the 1960s, even after Vondracek's ouster, suggests, however, that other factors may have been involved. It is clear that university wide issues contributed to the instability in the department. Many of these concerns manifest itself in a report produced in 1965 by a committee of the University Senate headed by Thorson.²⁴ This report was largely the compilation of data collected from a survey of departed faculty members. This report established that "Distance from major urban centers" was the most significant reason for faculty departures. A close second, however, was the perceived low "quality of educational leadership at all levels." In the notes collected from departed faculty in the survey they complain equally about their deans, department heads, and President Starcher, citing regularly his conservative style and direction of the University. These critiques clearly echo those found in an open letter authored by some of the more progressive, young faculty to Starcher in the same year.²⁵ In this letter they assert that the university is "in crisis" and that the administration has not done enough in these changing times to assure a good quality education for the students at the University. It is difficult to measure the sense of alienation felt by any individual faculty member, but it is nevertheless necessary to note that this feeling did exist. A feeling of alienation seemed particularly strong among the newest members of the University community, the very group who might have the best opportunities to depart.

A sense of frustration with the administration appears in conversations with Wilkins and Iseminger, and perhaps even Geiger.²⁶ They expressed particular frustration with Dean Bonner Witmer's apparent lack of interest in the department of history and the humanities in general.

²⁴ Robinson, "The Starcher Years," 24-27; "Report of Faculty Senate on the 'Rapid Turnover of Faculty' at the University of North Dakota," October 7, 1965. University Publications. University Council #3. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

²⁵ "Letter from Faculty to President Starcher," January 1965. University Archives. Collection #238, Box 67, File 5 Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

Wilkins relates this to Witmer's background as a physicist and before that as a practicing engineer, and his preference for the hard and practical sciences.²⁷ Robinson, provides a more moderate view, describing several incidents where Witmer was sympathetic to the needs of the department and placing most of the blame on Vondracek for not taking advantage of the increasing resources available to the University.²⁸ To be fair, Witmer's record suggests that he did not ignore the humanities entirely; his annual reports to the president show that he pressed relentlessly throughout the early 1960s for the creation of a Department of Religious Studies which eventually came into being in 1963.²⁹ Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the perception of alienation from the administration is sometimes as damaging as a true lack of interest on the part of the administration.

Another factor that appeared consistently in Robinson's work, although less prominent in the 1965 report, was that the salaries of faculty at the University remained well below the national average during the post-war period.³⁰ Robinson's autobiography demonstrated a constant preoccupation with money, and through the mid-50s at least, it is clear that the starting salaries for junior faculty were barely sufficient to get by in Grand Forks. The lack of resources for salaries certainly contributed to the tendency to hire most junior faculty before they were awarded their Ph.D. This allowed the department (and the Dean who had to approve all hires) to keep salaries low, although salaries for Instructors, the regular rank of faculty who had not completed their Ph.D. ranked higher compared to peer institutions than the salaries for more

²⁶ Interview with Wilkins, 10, 57; Interview with Gordon Iseminger by William Caraher, July 20, 2007.

²⁷ Interview with Wilkins, 10, 57: "Louis Geiger, when he was writing *The University of the Northern Plains* in connection with the seventy-fifth anniversary, he was saying to me one time that well, what really needed to be written in the book was that Bonner Witmer had presided over the decline of the Art College... I think what Lou had in mind was that in the pre-war years and then into the twenties in the days of Vernon P. Squires, the Arts College was promoted, was pushed, was advanced very vigorously by the dean. On the other hand Dean Witmer's training was really just about as far away from the arts concept as one could expect... the result was that in the post-war period when the University was growing in financial support and enrolment and the like, we didn't really have a champion of humanism, humanistic studies, at the helm, and the result was the approach the Dean had was that the Arts College, well, it was a service to the University."

²⁸ Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 247 (regarding Witmer's cooperation with the creation of the manuscript collection at the library), 249 (regarding Vondracek's leadership), 284 (regarding Witmer's attitude toward Lemmer's dismissal), 285 (regarding Witmer's role in bringing Ibrahim Noshy, a Fulbright lecturer and a historian, from Egypt to the department)

²⁹ Report of Dean R. B. Witmer to the President 1956-1957. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks; Report of Dean R. B. Witmer to the President 1957-1958, Report of Dean R. B. Witmer to the President 1958-1959; Report of Dean R. B. Witmer to the President 1959-1960; Report of Dean R. B. Witmer to the President 1960-1961; Robinson, "Starcher Years," 29-30.

³⁰ Geiger, 439-440.

senior faculty.³¹ Despite this advantage, and perhaps because of a perceived lack of opportunities at the University, once these most-junior faculty members received their Ph.D., they often moved on to better paying positions elsewhere.³² Ironically, the generally good quality of many of the faculty hired by the department – perhaps on account of the competitive salaries – and the demand for qualified faculty members to teach the influx of veterans all across the U.S. in the post-war period ensured that these faculty members often had little difficulty securing better positions elsewhere. Louis Geiger, for example, left UND to become department chair at Colorado College and later at Iowa State University; John Harnsberger moved on the Wichita State where he ultimately became department head; Wilkins was hired away, albeit briefly, to teach at Marshall University in his native West Virginia; Lemmer and Kirkpatrick both had careers in government service.

Whatever the reason for the constant turnover of faculty – the perceived lack of interest by Dean Witmer, the lack of funding for faculty, the location of the campus, or Vondracek’s problematic leadership – the constant need to hire new faculty was not easy for the department. In 1962-1963, for example, when Robert Wilkins was on sabbatical, the department offered the position to five people before Beverly Zweiben finally accepted it. Robinson admitted “The search for a new member of the department consumed a good deal of time.”³³ By the 1967-1968 academic year, Tweton, then department head, quipped in his annual report “The faculty remains constant for next year. No resignations (thank goodness) and no new staff.”³⁴

It is valuable to reinforce, however, that changes in faculty over the preceding decade was not simply replacing departing staff. Over the latter half of the 1960s, the department managed to double in size so that by the 1969-1970 academic year it could boast a faculty of 12: Robinson, Vondracek, Wilkins, Tweton, Thorson, Smith, Iseminger, Carter, Murray, Hart, Howard, and with a greatly reduced load Gerald Lawrence. From this group, Jerome Tweton would serve as department head and would continue to do so for the next 20 years. There is almost no discussion of how the department managed this remarkable expansion in the available

³¹ Robinson, “The Starcher Years,” 13, 36.

³² Robinson, “The Starcher Years,” 27 and “Report of the Faculty Senate Committee on the ‘Rapid Turnover of Faculty’ at the University of North Dakota October 7, 1965” University Publications, University Council #3, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks

³³ Department of History Report of the Departments to the Dean 1964-1965. UND History Department Files. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

³⁴ Department of History Report of the Departments to the Dean 1967-1968. UND History Department Files. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

sources and the interviews with faculty during the 1970s are silent on this matter. What is clear, nevertheless, is that the newly constituted department of the 1960s was able to take advantage of the growth experienced by the university in general while at the same time managing the revolving door of junior faculty.

Courses and Students

The department of the 1950s and 1960s took teaching very seriously. In part, the faculty devoted energy to teaching because they lacked research opportunities at the University and did not have a particularly large graduate program. The faculty, in general, felt they reaped rewards for their dedication to teaching. Teaching in the 1950s and 1960s presented challenges. Student expectations changed influenced as much by changing the demography of campus as broader transformations in the social climate of the nation.³⁵ The department, however, was able to adapt to these changes. Ironically, it may have been the regular turnover in faculty that contributed to its ability to adapt. The regular arrival of new and in many cases younger faculty allowed the department to stay apprised of current trends in teaching and maintain a good rapport with students during a particularly dynamic period in campus life. Consequently, Tweton has noted, that he, Thorson, Iseminger, Wilkins, and Smith all became accomplished lecturers.³⁶ Elwyn Robinson, in particular, was honored by the University for his outstanding teaching as was Playford Thorson, Gordon Iseminger, and Glenn Smith.³⁷

With the departure of Libby and Perkins, a new rigor descended on the departments course offerings. Libby's courses, characterized by a dependence on a rigid Socratic method of questions and answers based on readings from the textbook dated to an earlier time in pedagogical thinking. They also reflect the relative dearth of secondary source materials present in the library which made it difficult for him to encourage outside reading or research projects. The arrival of Robinson and Wilkins brought changes to the methods used in the classroom. Both men encouraged not only more free form in-class discussion, but also encouraged reading in the library. Consequently, they worked to develop the library collection and shape it to support the class that they taught.

³⁵ Interview with History Faculty.

³⁶ Interview with Tweton by William Caraher, August 16, 2007.

³⁷ Robinson, "The Starcher Years," 38:

From the 1947 catalogue until the catalogue of 1964-1966 the basic structure of course offerings in the Department remained the same. The department's offerings were divided into Junior Division and Senior Division courses. Junior Division courses were largely survey courses. Some of these course would appear familiar even today: History 101: European History to 1500. Other courses evoked the era of Libby and the interest in institutional history: History 208: Constitutional and Legal History of the United States and History 217: History of England to 1701. While most Junior Division courses were worth 3 credits, several two credit courses persisted – the most notable among them being Robinson's History of North Dakota – but over time the two credit offerings, a commonplace in the catalogue of the late 1940s and early 1950s became increasingly rare. It is clear that, like today, lower level history courses were popular as electives among underclassmen and some counted as prerequisites for other majors. The 100 level courses were requirements for numerous degrees ranging from Art to Journalism throughout the college of Arts, Sciences, and Letters. Economic history continued to be required for students in the School of Commerce, English history was encouraged by the English Department, and pre-law and law school student frequently took courses in Constitutional and legal history.

Senior Division offerings, designated by a 300 or 400 number, included more specialized studies and formed the core of the history major and minor. The offerings available varied widely with the faculty available. History majors needed 30 credits and were required to take 101, 102, 103, and 104 which represented the basic introductory sequence in European (and later Western Civilization) and American History. The balance of credits for the major was to come from the 200 level courses and above with a concentration in either U.S. or European history. Students could also earn a minor in history with 20 credits.

In the mid and late 1960s with the change in departmental leadership, there were several revisions to the catalogue. In 1964-1966 the Department began to offer Western Civilization rather than European History. In the next catalogue, as part of a continued refinement of the course offerings, they eliminated the old division between Junior and Senior level courses and grouped all courses as either European or American History. This coincided well with the continued specialization of the faculty, and the legacy of their graduate education exerted an influence on the nature of the courses offered by the department. As early as 1962, Iseminger urged the department to discontinue the practice of faculty teaching both U.S. and European

history course.³⁸ Another manifestation of this growing interest in offering more focused courses came in the introduction of 1 credit mini courses in 1969-1970. These courses featured short term intensive readings in a particular topic and introduced the students to the seminar style of learning. They also provided an opportunity to boost enrolment as the mini courses typically ran for only 7 weeks allowing for numerous mini courses to run over the semester. They appear to have been very popular with both non-majors and majors alike. In fact, the department had to create stipulations preventing majors of loading up on mini courses and neglecting regular 3 credit upper divisions courses. The mini-courses were only one component of a substantial revision to the curriculum summarized in the 1968-1970 course catalogue: “The History program at the University is designed to prepare students for public school teaching, graduate work in history, government service, or as a pre-professional program for law or theology...”³⁹ The department recognized that such diverse goals required at least two different plans for majors in history, the basic structure of which we have preserved to this day. Plan A, which included proficiency in a foreign language and close to 40 hours of history courses, encouraged students to develop the skills necessary for graduate work in history. Whereas Plan B required work in the Social Sciences in addition to the typical 30 hours history course load, and served as a solid foundation for students wishing to become secondary school teachers.

Understanding undergraduate enrolment figures during this period is complex as many factors contributed to the fluctuations in departmental growth. At first, undergraduate enrollments grew slowly in the 1950s. By the early 1960s, the expanding student population at the University fed slow, but consistent departmental growth. The slow growth in enrolments relative to the rapidly expanding size of the University during the 1950s was largely attributable to faculty taking course reductions. The gradual move to a 12 credit per semester teaching load did not at first coincide with an expanded number of faculty in the department and thereby limited the number of classes available to the growing number of students at the university. As compensation for this during the 1960s, the department allowed for larger class sizes which enabled them to take advantage of the expanding student body and departmental enrollments

³⁸ Department of History Report of the Departments to the Dean 1962-1963. UND History Department Files. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota. “Dr. Iseminger believes that having staff members teach both in American and European History fields is a bad policy.” Robinson, on the other hand, believed it to be healthy and necessary as there are more students in American history than European.

³⁹ *Bulletin of the University of North Dakota: General Catalogue 1968-1970*. (Grand Forks 1968), 266-267.

outpaced both the college and the university.⁴⁰ These larger classes at the 100 level, in particular, often enrolled over 100 students, and the instructor was often aided by a graduate assistant or an upper level undergraduate teaching assistant to help with the grading. 200 level classes, some of which were required for majors in other departments, regularly enroll as many as 50 or 60 students. Upper level classes, in contrast, tended to lag in enrollment, and this was a regular concern in the annual report of the departments. Consequently the department sought ways to restrict enrollment in the 100 level to underclassmen and encourage Juniors and Seniors to take upper level courses.⁴¹ They did this by reducing the number of lower level courses offered to drive more students into upper division classes. It is during this time as well that American History courses began to enroll more students than courses in European History.

Graduates from the Department went on to the standard array of professions common even today to B.A.s in History.⁴² Many went on to teach in North Dakota at levels ranging from Junior High to High School. The department also produced the expected crop of doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. A handful of students went on to graduate study elsewhere and a few even eventually earned Ph.D.s

Contemporary with the ongoing development of the undergraduate curriculum, the 1950s and 1960s saw a renaissance of the graduate program. The M.A. program throughout the 1950s and 1960s prospered even after the Ph.D. in history was terminated in 1962-1963. The decision to terminate the Ph.D. program, while resisted by Vondracek, resulted from the departures of the late 1950s had reduced the department to only two or three full Ph.D.s.⁴³ Despite the small and perhaps under-qualified department, the bibliographic record of Robinson's, *History of North Dakota* attests to the continued significance and quantity of the scholarship that the department's graduate program encouraged. Of the 57 unpublished graduate theses cited by Robinson, 31 were M.A. theses in the Department from after 1950 compared to only 11 from before that

⁴⁰ Interview with Wilkins, 84-85.

⁴¹ Department of History Report of the Departments to the Dean 1963-1964. UND History Department Files. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota; Department of History Report of the Departments to the Dean 1964-1965. UND History Department Files. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

⁴² The best source for this is: *University of North Dakota Department of History Centennial Newsletter*. Unpublished Manuscript. Chester Fritz Library. Grand Forks, North Dakota, 11-26

⁴³ Department of History Report of the Departments to the Dean 1962-1963. UND History Department Files. University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 367-368. Art Lee was the last residential Ph.D. student at UND during the 1962-1963 academic year. He completed his degree in 1968 and taught for many years at the Bemidji State University publishing several books including a history of that school: *College in the Pines: A History of Bemidji State*. (Minneapolis 1970).

time.⁴⁴ These theses in many ways reflect the position of the Department as not only the primary collector of material on North Dakota history, but the place where much of that material received its first analysis and interpretation. The value of graduate work in department is also reflected in that several of these M.A. students go on to substantial academic careers. Two M.A.s from the department returned to teach at the University. Sinclair Snow, who earned his M.A. in 1955 and his Ph.D. from Virginia taught in the department in the later 1960s. Jerome Tweton received his M.A. at the University of North Dakota before moving on to the University of Oklahoma, teaching at Dana College in Nebraska, and ultimately returning to the University of North Dakota in 1965. Other graduate alumni continued their careers elsewhere. Charles Glaab wrote his thesis on John Burke before heading to the University of Missouri for his Ph.D. He taught at the University of Toledo and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. William Phillips worked on Asle J. Gronna for his M.A. and later for this Ph.D. also at the University of Missouri and went on to teach at Arizona State. Edward Blackorkby received both his M.S. and Ph.D. in the Department and taught at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. Jackson K. Putnam took his Ph.D. at Stanford and taught at Cal State Fullerton.

It is perhaps the success of the M.A. program and the expanded faculty of the department that led in the late 1960s to the creation of Doctor of the Arts program in history. The proposal was made in February of 1969 and coauthored by Robinson, Tweton and Iseminger.⁴⁵ They understood the D.A. to be a response to the increasingly narrow scope of specialization that had come to characterize the Ph.D. degree. This specialization, while ideal for the increased focus expected of scholars at major research universities, did little to accommodate the needs of smaller universities and colleges and junior colleges which, like the University of North Dakota just a half decade earlier, might expect a faculty member to teach a broad ranges of material chronologically and topically. In fact, as I have noted, the Department at the University of North Dakota had expected their faculty to be able to teach both U.S. and European History as late as the mid 1960s, and it was only newly hired faculty of the early and mid-1960s who found this practice disagreeable. In contrast, then, the goal of the Doctor of the Arts was “to prepare

⁴⁴ Robinson, *History*, 567-569. See also: D. Rylance, *UND These and Dissertations on North Dakota 1895-1971*. (Grand Forks 1972), 71-76.

⁴⁵ E. Robinson, G. Iseminger, J. Tweton, “Proposal for a Doctor of Arts Degree. Submitted to A. William Johnson, Graduate Dean, and the Graduate Committee.” February 26, 1969. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

individuals for careers in teaching or curriculum development in either colleges or schools.”⁴⁶

The degree required two years of study beyond the M.A. and a dissertation which was a research paper that could focus on either questions in teaching of history or its study.

The D.A. degree was specifically designed to respond to the needs of schools which required qualified educators more than specialized scholars. The 1969 D.A. proposal cited then current articles in both the *Educational Record* and the *Journal of Higher Education* that advocated the creation of a degree that emphasized teaching over research to fill teaching positions in smaller, less research oriented schools.⁴⁷ Regionally, a questionnaire circulated among a group of small liberal arts colleges, state colleges, and junior colleges in the Northern Plains showed that there would be decent job prospects for individuals with the D.A. in History. Finally, the local market for such degrees would be exceptionally strong as it would be a particularly suitable degree in many of the numerous smaller schools in the North Dakota: Dickinson State College, Jamestown College, Mary College, Minot State College, Mayville State College, and Valley City State College. The D.A. continues today as a thriving corner of the department.

The department of the 1950s and 1960s blended its traditional offerings with the courses reflecting the increased specialization characteristic of the discipline, innovative classes that boasted enrollments, and new degree offerings. This balance between the old and new in the department fairly represents both the leadership of the senior members of the department like Wilkins and Robinson, and the room for innovation offered to newer members of the faculty like Tweton, Iseminger, and Thorson. The dynamism of the department in this regard carried on through its other endeavors as well.

The Work of the Department

The departmental renaissance extended beyond the classroom, and despite the turnover in faculty, several significant initiatives were begun during the 1950s and 1960s which continue to bear fruit for the department and university even today. In general, the members of the department produced a consistently impressive slate of public and academic scholarship. Accordingly this chapter highlights several of the most prominent initiative of the department at

⁴⁶ Robinson, Iseminger, Tweton, “Proposal for a Doctor of Arts Degree.”

⁴⁷ V. R. Cardozier, “The Doctor of Arts Degree,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 39 (1968), 261-270; E. Walters, “Trends toward a Degree for College Teachers,” *Educational Record* 48.2 (1967), 132-137;

this time and shows how these projects continued trends dating from the earliest decades of the department while at the same time reflecting the ever changing professional concerns of the discipline, the University, and academia more broadly. In particular, the department developed a close relationship to a number of key stakeholders in the university community ranging from the state political figures to key members of the alumni and the administration.

The Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection

Perhaps the single most significant achievement of the 1950s was the effort of Geiger and Robinson to develop of a Department of Special Collections and the recognition of the importance of a regional-and university-wide archive.⁴⁸ The initial impulse in the department for collecting important historical material from the state came under Orin G. Libby. He and his seminar recognized the importance of collecting material relevant to the state's history. Both unsystematic and systematic efforts, like the WPA funded Historical Data Project, began the process of collecting, preparing, storing, indexing, and ultimately archiving material relevant to the early history of the state, although much of these efforts focused on the State Historical Society in Bismarck.⁴⁹ It was not until the 1950s that a growing awareness of the lack of material from the state's more recent history spurred Robinson, Geiger, and John Parker to envision a manuscript division at the library. They solicited resources from Dean Witmer, namely a sheet of 100 stamps, and sent out letters to a list of North Dakota notables asking them to consider depositing their papers, or in some cases the papers of their parents, in an archive housed at the University.⁵⁰ This brought very few results, but did not diminish their enthusiasm for the project. Moreover, they were able to get President West to approve the formal creation of the manuscript collect and named after Orin G. Libby in honor of his contribution to the study of history in the state of the state. At the same time, they appealed to J. Lloyd Stone, the ambitious new director of the Alumni Foundation and an important figure in the development of University resources during the 1950s and 1960s, to run a story on the archives in the Alumni Foundation newsletter.⁵¹ This story appealed to the name recognition afforded by Orin G. Libby and Elwyn

⁴⁸ The following paragraphs draw heavily upon: L. Geiger, "A Reminiscence on the Founding of the Libby Manuscript Collect," in *Guide to the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection and Related Research Collections at the University of North Dakota*. J.B. Davenport ed. (Grand Forks 1975), 3-8.

⁴⁹ J.F.S. Smeall, *The University's Library 1883-1982*. Chester Fritz Library. Grand Forks, North Dakota, 7.

⁵⁰ Geiger, "A Reminiscence," 3.

⁵¹ "University Historians Collect N.D. Papers," *Alumni Review* 28 no. 10 (Feb. 7, 1952), 1, 4.

Robinson who had taught many alumni during their long teaching careers at the university. The story also appealed to North Dakotans's well-developed sense of identity by noting that Robinson was working on the definitive narrative history of the state.

They followed up these efforts with a personal appeal to both ordinary and important personages and institutions who may have had collections of material worthy of preservation. In 1951, Geiger and Robinson, along with Robert Wilkins traveled to Bismarck to explore the resources of the State Historical Society and State Government, only to realize that there was no systematic effort to collect documents important to the history of the State of North Dakota. Moreover, many state documents were simply stored in the basement of the state capitol building without any order and without an archivist.⁵² This prompted Geiger and Robinson, in particular, to begin to collect material from various figures of political importance or their descendents throughout the state. Initially they sought to gather the papers of Lyn Frazier and approached his widow, apparently while she was herding cows on her farm near Concrete, North Dakota.⁵³ Unfortunately, she reported that she had none of her husband's papers thus eliminating one potential collection. This did not, however, dull the enthusiasm or energy of Geiger and Robinson. By the fall of 1951, Robinson and Geiger met with the widow of William Lemke, the widow of former Governor John Moses, the daughter of former Governor L.B. Hanna, the son of former Governor John Burke, and the son of Senator Asle J. Gronna, seeking to gather the papers of these important politicians for the University manuscript collection.⁵⁴ In 1952, they complemented these appeals to famous North Dakotans with a call to ordinary folks to pass along material of historical significance. To do this, Robinson, Geiger, and George Lemmer made use of the university radio station, KFJM, through a radio broadcast called "Preserving the History of the Northwest" to solicit historically important materials from throughout the state.⁵⁵ The radio broadcast and countless hours and miles of personal travel eventually attracted a substantial and important collection of material to the manuscript collection. The highlight of their early efforts was the William Lemke Papers which were deposited into the manuscript collection and today account for over 50 linear feet worth of material. Through the 1950s, they also managed to secure William Langer's and Milton Young's papers for the collection. These

⁵² Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 244.

⁵³ Geiger, "A Reminiscence," 4; Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 245.

⁵⁴ Geiger, "A Reminiscence," 5.

⁵⁵ Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 246.

collections in addition to the significant donations from both famous and ordinary North Dakotans remain the core of the Orin G. Libby Collection today.

At the same time, the history faculty had begun to collect the papers of various figures important to the history of the University. In an interview in the 1970s, Robison recalls that the papers of President Merrifield were simply stored in his departmental office.⁵⁶ The gap between the founding of the university and the recognition of the value of this material led to the loss of many valuable documents; nevertheless, the archives do contain the some particularly important early documents including correspondence of Merrifield and others early presidents, the minutes of the university faculty meetings, and the early minutes of the board of trustees detailing the founding of the university.⁵⁷ Ultimately these papers as well as many other important documents pertaining to the University's early history fed the desire to create a formal university archives.

Cooperation between the department of history and John R. Ashton, the university librarian from 1954-1959, ensured that there was a library staff member responsible for keeping the growing groups of collections in order. The final step to ensure the preservation of both vital university records and the documents of the state came with the building of the new library in 1958-1959. At this time, a room was set aside for the growing collection.

Faculty Scholarship with Local Ties

Perhaps the main impetus behind the creation of the Libby Manuscript collection came from the number of faculty members actively involved in researching the history of the state and its institutions. As I have noted, the Department had long held close ties to the community and Libby's early seminars and scholarship depended heavily upon local resources which, in turn, both developed the state's nascent historical awareness and encouraged the development of the State Historical Society. Moreover, the department played a key role in establishing relationships with alumni through cultivating their nostalgia for both the early days of the University and the early days of statehood. It is unsurprising, then, that Robinson and Geiger both featured prominently in the festivities surrounding the University's 75th Anniversary which in many ways was a watershed for the development of the alumni associations efforts to collect resources for the university from the growing body of university alumni.⁵⁸ While taking nothing

⁵⁶ Interview with History Faculty, 28.

⁵⁷ Geiger, 457-460 gives as good a review of the material available for the study of the early years of the university.

⁵⁸ Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 340.

away from these men's abilities as sophisticated and "objective" historians, the work of the department provided a kind of goodwill currency for the university at the very moment when the Alumni Foundation sought to capitalize, quite literally, on the passion of the University's alumni.⁵⁹

Perhaps the most notable example of the cross pollination between alumni interests and departmental scholarship emerges in L. Geiger's *The University of the Northern Plains* which was written for the 75th Anniversary of the University. Geiger had started researching higher education in general while he was a Ford Fellow at Stanford and Harvard during the 1954-1955 academic year.⁶⁰ This led President Starcher to approach him with an invitation to write a history of the University. The main body of his text was written in earnest during from 1956 to 1958 when it went to press just in time for the University's 75th anniversary. The funding for the project came primarily from the Alumni Foundation, in particular, a donation of the New York financier and alumnus John Hancock who on his death in 1957 gave \$50,000 gift to the Alumni Association.⁶¹ Geiger received a course reduction, a summer appointment with no teaching, and, perhaps most importantly, assurances that he could write his book with no interference from the President's office or any obligation to alumni or other distinguished people.⁶² This is not to suggest that he composed his history without attention to audience; he states "I have tried to write for several audiences and purposes: to inform faculty, students, and alumni, and to entertain them a little if I could, to provide the historical background which must be a part of any intelligent planning for the future and to make some small contribution to the general history of American life and culture."⁶³ Geiger sought contributions to his research from all quarters and his efforts to collect materials for the composition of the history expanded the manuscript collection and filled in some of the numerous gaps in the University archives. In particular, he corresponded regularly with numerous distinguished alumnae, particularly Edna Twamley who would become a major donor to the university as well as Kathrine B. Tiffany, who not only endowed in her own right the East Asian Room and the Kathrine B. Tiffany Graduate Room in the library, but also encouraged her nephew Chester Fritz to make numerous donations to the

⁵⁹ Robinson, "The Starcher Years," 11-13.

⁶⁰ This work eventually led to: L. Geiger, *Higher Education in a Maturing Democracy* (Lincoln, 1963)

⁶¹ Robinson, "Starcher Years," 11

⁶² President George W. Starcher to President Howard R. Bowen (Iowa State University). February 1, 1965. President's Office Records, UA #42, Box 32, File 9. Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

University, including funds for the library, the auditorium, and the Chester Fritz Distinguished Professorships. Geiger circulated drafts of his manuscript to both of these individuals, as well as other leading members of the university community, and Tiffany, who taught English for many years and had graduate training, made extensive, in most cases stylistic, comments.⁶⁴ These connections are not intended to impugn the veracity or scholarly character of the work, but rather to show that Geiger clearly viewed his work as a link between alumni and the University.

As the book neared completion Geiger and Starcher sought to find it an academic publisher who would help subsidize the printing cost, provide editorial assistance, and ensure it a broad circulation. In the end, this effort was unsuccessful and the University of North Dakota Press undertook its publication amidst the 75th Anniversary festivities of the University. Despite the lack of a major academic press, the book received a focused and successful circulation. In particular, President Starcher gave numerous copies to “stakeholders” in the University ranging from distinguished alumni to, perhaps as importantly, politicians at both the state and national level. The book also served as a model for university histories elsewhere in the U.S. as Starcher distributed copies of the book to his fellow university presidents. Finally, to complete the circle, the publication of the *University of the North Plains* ensured Geiger promotion to full professor. Geiger’s work served as a focal point in commemorating the Universities 75th year in existence and served as a vital link between its past and present.⁶⁵

Another good example during this time of the close ties between the department and the larger community is the invaluable work of Elwyn Robinson. In 1966 his *History of North Dakota* appeared, the first modern comprehensive history of the state. Robinson’s work grew out of his relationship with Orin G. Libby. When Robinson was first hired in 1936 he was invited to dinner with Libby and his wife, Eva Libby at that time told him that her husband was planning on writing a history of North Dakota. This was of course reasonable to suspect

⁶³ Geiger, x-xi.

⁶⁴ For these correspondence see: Orin G. Libby Manuscripts Collection, Louis Geiger Papers, Collection #667, box 3, folder 3.

⁶⁵ Robinson, “The Starcher Years,” 12 notes that Starcher “asked Dr. Robert P. Wilkins of the history department to write a memoir of Hughes that the University Press published in 1961.” This small volume dated to the same period when the University arranged for Hughes family to provide money for the student union through the purchase of bonds and to fund the construction of the Hughes Fine Arts Building. Hughes was a well-known philanthropist and served on the board of trustee’s at the University of Miami and contributing money to that institution. His wealth derived in part from his ownership of North Dakota Utility companies, however, and he sought opportunities to give back to the state. Wilkins’s book emphasized Hughes’ North Dakota roots including numerous anecdotes from his childhood and his involvement in North Dakota politics in the teens and twenties. R. P. Wilkins, *Edmond A. Hughes*. (Grand Forks 1961).

considering Libby's regular contributions to the history of the state and his involvement in the State Historical Society.⁶⁶ With Libby's retirement, however, Robinson pledged himself to this task.

Robinson provides an intimate and careful account of his work on this volume in his autobiography, so a detailed outline is not necessary here, but a brief survey of his efforts will serve to demonstrate the close ties between the department and the larger community.⁶⁷ Robinson's work on the History began in the second half of the 1940s with Robinson offering a course on the Trans-Mississippian West and by 1950 this course had shifted its focus to the History of North Dakota. At around the same time, in 1947, Robinson began to give a series of radio talks called the *Heroes of Dakota* on the campus radio station KFJM. Initially the plan was to give one, 15 minute talk a week over the course of the 1947-1948 academic year. The talks amounted to only 5-6 pages of text, maybe 1200-1400 words, and despite or perhaps because of their short length, they became surprisingly popular. In 1948-1949, Robinson agreed to give 20 more talks. The popularity of the talks led to their syndication elsewhere in the state, appearing on KFYR in Bismarck and KVNJ in Fargo. Robinson made copies of his talks, bound them informally, and sold them, first for ten cents and then for twenty-five cents to cover the cost of printing and binding. The research Robinson did in preparing these talks and his class formed the foundation for his later research for his *History of North Dakota*. Moreover, the radio talks linked the work of the department clearly and in a very public way to the popular history of the state. The administration rewarded Robinson's diligence and ingenuity by promoting him to Associate Professor and giving him a generous raise.

The interest in collecting material for an archive, as I have already discussed, further fed Robinson's enthusiasm and resources for his work on the History. He began to write in earnest in 1952 and spent most of the 1950s working on the manuscript. By the 1956 he was in regular contact with the University of Nebraska Press. Over this time, he continuously sought course releases to devote more time to the book and received partial releases in 1956-1957 and 1957-1958. Robinson was particularly gratified with President Starcher on one of his first trips to campus took an active interest in his work. This led to Robinson becoming one of the earliest

⁶⁶ Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 124.

⁶⁷ Tweton, "Elwyn B. Robinson and the Themes of North Dakota," in Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966; reprint, Fargo: Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, 1995), vii-xii..

contributors to President Starcher's faculty lecture series. Robinson's invitation to participate in 1958 in the 75th anniversary convocation ceremony encouraged him to formalize some of his thoughts on North Dakota History. At this talk, Robinson introduced his famous "Themes in North Dakota History" which even today exerts a certain historiographic influence over the popular and scholarly interpretation of the state's history.⁶⁸ Robinson submitted the first draft of his book to the University of Nebraska Press in 1962 and completed revisions throughout the first half of the 1960s. The first edition appeared in the 1966.

The work of Geiger and Robinson, of course, reflect just one aspect of the department's scholarly output. Throughout the 1950 and, in particular, the 1960s nearly every member of the department produced important scholarly contributions in their fields. Some of these, in fact, resonated every bit as much with the local concerns as the better-known works discussed here. Most notable among them during the 1960s were Glenn Smith's 1968 dissertation on William Langer, Jerome Tweton's work on the "The Marquis de Mores and His Dakota Venture: a Study in Failure" (*Journal of the West* 6 (October 1967), and Stanley Murray's work on the agricultural history of the Red River Valley (which, in all fairness, was largely written while he was on the faculty at North Dakota State).⁶⁹ The overall picture that this scholarly output presents, however, is a department committed to becoming a leader in the study of the region and the state. This impression, of course, should not neglect the work done by the Europeanists in the department: Charles Carter continued his work on Hittite cult inventories, Gordon Iseminger published on the history of British diplomacy in the Balkans,⁷⁰ and Playford Thorson, while working to complete his dissertation, published on Swedish history.⁷¹ This work not only secured the department its important role in the history of the University, but also became the chief source of its influence in the larger academic world. The University recognized the remarkable record of achievements of the department in the 1960s by awarding the 1968-1969 McDermott Award for Excellence in Research and Creative Work.

⁶⁸ Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 279.

⁶⁹ Stanley Norman Murray, *The Valley Comes of Age: A History of Agriculture in the Valley of the Red River of the North, 1812-1920* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1967).

⁷⁰ G. Iseminger, "The Hatti-Humayun, 1856-1860: An Attempt at Precipitate Westernization," *NDQ* 36.1 (1968), 30-41; --, "Old Turkish Hands: The British Levantine Consuls, 1856-1876," *The Middle East Journal* 22 (1968), 297-316.

⁷¹ P. V. Thorson, "Free Enterprise Defense in Sweden: The Pansar Boat Collection of 1912," *NDQ* 36.1 (1968), 42-49.

Other Work of the Department

There are several other development of note during the 1960s that demonstrate the position of the department both at the university and in the greater intellectual community. First, in 1966 the Department developed the Northern Great Plains History Conference. This conference, initially a cooperative venture with the University of Manitoba, sought to provide a venue for scholars based in the Northern Plains to present their work as it was often prohibitively expensive to attend national meetings. The initial conference in 1966 was held in the Memorial Union and attracted over 150 scholars. In subsequent years attendance grew further. While many of the papers focused on the history of the Northern Plains, it included panels on other topics as well. This conference also improved the department's visibility in a regional context as the conference frequently attracted scholars from more prominent universities like Wisconsin and Minnesota. Over the next decade, the responsibilities for the conference were shared between the faculty of the department and other schools in the area. The conference continues to be a viable academic conference to this day.

In the late 1960s the department gained control over the *North Dakota Quarterly*, one of the venerable publications of the University. Since its refounding in 1956, it had been in the hands of the English Department under the editorship Jon R. Ashton and Joseph F.S. Smeall. In 1968, Wilkins became editor of the *North Dakota Quarterly* and in his opening remarks invoked the *Quarterly Journal*, the historical journal edited by Libby in the first decades of the 20th century and the nationally relevant articles featured in its pages.⁷² The first volume under Wilkins editorship featured articles from two members of the department, Iseminger and Thorson as well as the University Archivist, Dan Rylance, who sometimes taught courses in the department of history. The scope of these articles, however, was broad ranging from Rylance article on North Dakota Senator Gerald Nye to Iseminger's and Thorson's article focused on Turkish and Swedish history respectively.⁷³ In this way, *North Dakota Quarterly* embraced, at least at this moment, the national and international interests present in the department and embraced the growing specialization present among its members.

⁷² R. Wilkins, "Editor's Notes," *North Dakota Quarterly* 36 (1968), 4.

⁷³ D. Rylance, "A Controversial Career: Gerald P. Nye, 1925-1946," *NDQ* 36.1 (1968)5-19; G. Iseminger, "The Hatti-Humayun, 1856-1860: An Attempt at Precipitate Westernization," *NDQ* 36.1 (1968), 30-41; P. V. Thorson, "Free Enterprise Defense in Sweden: The Pansar Boat Collection of 1912," *NDQ* 36.1 (1968), 42-49.

It perhaps seems fitting to conclude a chapter which features departmental forays into media ranging from radio, to scholarly journals, to traditional monographs, to discuss the role of film in the history of the department. When the department produced its brief *Centennial Newsletter* shortly after the 100th Anniversary of the University in 1984, the first paragraph credited the department with introducing movies to campus in the late 1940s.⁷⁴ Robinson remarked in his autobiography on this achievement. According to Robinson, the film series was the work of him and Wilkins and began in the spring of 1950 with the showing of *Peter the Great*.⁷⁵ Wilkins recalled that Vondracek supplied ROTC training films for some of the earliest movies in the series.⁷⁶ The films apparently were well attended and the department was able to gather consistently enough money by passing the hat to defray the cost of film rental. While there is no indication that the departmental film series, which was later sponsored by the History honor society, Phi Alpha Theta, produced any lasting results on campus, it does demonstrate the department's ongoing willingness to experiment with new media and forms of communicating history in the postwar period.

Conclusion

The postwar period marked a renaissance in the fortunes of the Department of History at the University, and in many ways its story parallels that of the university. Enrolments increased significantly over the course of this time. The faculty produced several very significant scholarly works and numerous smaller contributions, many of which continued the close ties between the department and the communities initiated by the work of Orin G. Libby. The department created the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection which continued Libby's efforts to collect and preserve historical documents of significance to the history of the state and the region. These documents became the basis for a revitalized M.A. program which produced both important works of scholarship on the history of the state, but also students who would go on to contribute to the discipline more broadly.

The postwar period was not entirely about looking backward, however. It also marked a time of innovation. The department expanded from 4-6 faculty members typical of the interwar period to over 10. The new faculty members who had received far more specialized graduate

⁷⁴ *University of North Dakota Department of History Centennial Newsletter*, i.

⁷⁵ Robinson, *A Professor's Story*, 218.

⁷⁶ Interview with Wilkins, 40.

education introduced numerous new courses and areas of specialization. The changing make up of the department eventually led not only to a restructuring of the history major over the course of the 1960, the first major revision of the degree since the time of Libby, but also the introduction of the D.A. degree which was designed to serve the needs of the universities and colleges of the Midwestern states. The new members of the expanded faculty contributed to many of the major departmental projects, and perhaps as importantly supplied a critical voice to departmental and University affairs. Finally, the faculty of this period also took advantage of the new media rapidly coming available to the campus community, particularly radio and later movies to open their work to a wider audience.

While the history of the department during this time could perhaps be viewed as an unmitigated success story, it is important to note several of the old problems persisted. The members of the department, both old and new, found the administration to be unsupportive during much of the 1950s and 1960s. Low salaries, low morale, and a feeling of alienation from the powers-that-be undoubtedly contributed to the rapid turnover of faculty in the department throughout this time. Despite the instability of the department, it may be all the more remarkable that the faculty were able to achieve as much as they did.