Class of 1886

Minutes of Reunion

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MINUTES of REUNION

June 18-19-20, 1931
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Tipton, Iowa, March 16, 1936.

To the Members of the Law Class of 1886, University of Michigan; and to their friends:

I am mailing herewith a copy of the Minutes of the Class Reunion—45th anniversary—held in Ann Arbor June 18, 19, and 20, 1931. I am sending this to you for fear you may have overlooked what was done five years ago; by reading the Minutes many things may be recalled to you. I am also taking the liberty of mailing it to some of the friends of the class; it is understood there is no law requiring the outsider to read it. The Minutes may be a bore; it may be the members of the class won't read them. However, if they knew the time I have taken in gathering this data they might at least report that they had read them.

Now: I want you to remember that our next reunion starts on Thursday evening, June 18, 1936, at five o'clock. We will meet at the Betsy Barbour Dormitory. Arrangements have been made for quarters there. The reunion will continue through Friday, and Saturday morning. We will all attend the Alumni luncheon Saturday noon.

Many of you may not know it, but the Regents have this year changed the time of the Commencement exercises; they will be held Saturday afternoon at four o'clock. This will give us an opportunity to attend them. Under the old plan many of us could not remain until Monday. Personally I am pleased with the new plan.

13 of our members passed away between 1926 and 1931.
12 have passed since 1931, up to this date.
I just hope that everyone will make an extra effort and come to the 1936 reunion.

Sincerely,

JOHN T. MOFFIT,
Sec'y. Law Class, 1886, U. of M.
1886-1931—45 years is a long time; almost a generation and a half as historians figure it. This law class has been out of University of Michigan Law School 45 years!

At the close of our last reunion on June 12, 1926 a motion was made by a classmate who never does any work that the regular five year reunion be again held, in June, 1931. I have noticed that it is easy for a person who sits by and listens to what is going on to unload the burden on someone else. But such is life and I presume it always will be.

Instantly the old officers started the campaign for the 50th Anniversary; some plans were made right then and there. I understand there are some class secretaries who can get up a reunion and make it a howling success without any work and on short notice. I want to meet them at Ann Arbor at our next reunion in June 1936. The only way we have ever been able to get by is by constantly working, month in and month out, year in and year out, during the whole five years. And then those that are responsible have little to be proud of because they can see how things could have been so very much better.

There has been constant correspondence with the living members, and the continuous looking up of histories of those who have passed on. In the Secretary's office there is an open file; it is never closed; as soon as Commencement day was fixed for 1931 the campaign was renewed with more and more vigor.

Thursday, June 18, 1931.

The reunion really started at Chicago. Arrangements had been made for those who passed through Chicago to meet at the Michigan Central depot and take car number 506 in train number 10, leaving Chicago at 10:30 A. M.

This plan was arranged some years ago by the Michigan Central; seats were reserved for us. Yes—other alumni members from other classes had taken the same train and came through to call on us.

When we arrived at Ann Arbor toward evening those who had come by auto from other directions met us at the depot and we had a real procession going up to our headquarters at the Beesy Barbour House.
Headquarters again at the Betsy Barbour House. To those of you who have not been back in recent years—this is a dormitory just across the street from the old law building.

Spears had made the arrangements; they were the best ever; the top floor was reserved for our members and their families; the second floor for the rest of us. The courtesies extended by the management were wonderful.

Thursday Evening

Dinner in a private dining room at the Michigan Union where Spears had arranged to have meals served, and where we had our first roll call. The answers came from Portland to New York City: P. J. Bannon, Portland, Oregon; John L. Breck, Jackson; W. H. Brunson, St. Johns; James A. Crawford, Memphis; Alfred C. Crozier, New York City; Charles Dresbach, Circleville, Ohio; A. W. Farrer and wife, Kansas City; Leonard B. Gardner, wife and son, Lansing; J. W. Houd, Rock Island, Ill.; H. D. Meritweth, Grosse Pointe Park; Volney Miller, Union City, Ind.; John T. Moffit, Tipton, Iowa; Kelly S. Searl, wife and daughter, St. Johns; James G. Smith, Kansas City; W. J. Spears and wife, Vassar; — 15 members now present; a most satisfactory turnout for so early.

The Secretary gave some preliminary reports after dinner and then we re-assembled in Dormitory parlors, having spent two or three hours at the dinner table, and kept up our visiting until the midnight bells rang; and they did ring; the House Mother drove us all out of there, and we had to observe the rules. Good Old Rules!

Friday, June 19, 1931

Friday morning brought in Lincoln Avery of Port Huron; W. S. Meeker of Greenville, Ohio; H. W. Neiman, wife and two grandsons of Elmore, Ohio; and Fred B. Shepherd of Oswego, N. Y. — Now the members present numbered 19. 10 still engaged in law; 9 retired or in business.

Commencing with the time when good old Dr. Hutchins was just our law lecturer our class has always called on him; when he got to be President, our first function was to call; then, the following Presidents—Dr. Burton and Dr. Little—humored us by permitting us to call on them. So we just took a chance and asked the new Prexy, Dr. Ruthven, to let us keep up the practice. He gave us fifteen minutes on Friday morning.

The report of what our spokesman, Judge Dresbach, said in addressing President Ruthven is put in here only because of the positive direction of the class. It seems as though some of it is not merited. It follows:
"MR. PRESIDENT:

Our pride in this University, our pride in being graduates of this University, is more convincingly shown by our presence than by anything which we can say.

Forty-five years is a long time. We were students in your law school when the great Harry B. Hutchins first came as a teacher to that law school, and we have a pardonable pride in the fact that, as a Class, we kept in touch with him up to the time of his death.

Our Class has been unusually united. We have a record of the place of residence of all the members who are living, and we have a record of the date of death and the place of burial of those that are dead. We have a fairly full biography of every member of the Class.

Our unity is perhaps due in some measure to our individual loyalty to the University, and to our affection for each other, but, in a much larger sense, it is due to the zeal of our Class Secretary, Judge Moffit. He is the heart and soul of the Class, and he has furnished a striking example of the fact that a Prophet can win honor in his own country, among his neighbors, among those with whom he lives his daily life, because the people of Judge Moffit's Judicial District in Iowa have kept him in service as a District Judge since the time 'when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary'.

Term after term they have re-elected him, and only recently he was substantially unanimously re-elected for still another term.

His modesty is only exceeded by his merit, and I am aware that he will not approve of what I am saying about him, but our affection for him is so real that we cannot forego this tribute to him.

I was told to talk about the Class. Well, he is the only thing about the Class that is out of the ordinary—so I just had to talk about him.

Mr. President, we beg you to accept our good wishes for a long and distinguished administration as President of this great University. We thank you for the honor of being received by you."

Each member was presented to President Ruthven, and many of them he recalled. We all liked him very much and bespeak for him many, many years of successful administration.

Then to Room C of the Law Building in which our class picture was hanging. I fear it is our last meeting in the old Law Building as I understand everything is to be removed to the Law Quadrangle.

The Minutes of the 1926 reunion, very full,
consisting of ten printed pages, and containing much interesting matter, were read and approved.

We then listened to the report of Spears, Searl and Gardner who had attended Ezra Smith's funeral.

At this instant the clock struck eleven; we all stood, bowed our heads and faced the east, in respect to the memory of our departed classmates.

You will recall that in 1896, at our first reunion, a list of our deceased members was read; it was then suggested that we stand and bow our heads; we did so. When that was reported, McKenzie, who had never been at a reunion, wrote back and said he would suggest we make it a custom and fix the time to stand at eleven o'clock on the first day of each reunion, and that each member of the class, wherever he might be, would join in this ceremony. The plan was adopted, and since then, to be sure the custom which arose because of the War, of facing the East has been followed.

Here let us recall that during our 1921 reunion the clock struck eleven while we were in President Burton's office. Mr. Crawford our President raised his hand and said to President Burton that we always observed this hour by standing with bowed heads in respect to those who were deceased. President Burton ceased speaking and joined with us. Later he wrote us,

"You also may be sure that nothing has touched me more deeply than the beautiful way in which your class paused in my office at eleven o'clock to pay their respects to the memory of the men who can no longer meet with them. It seemed to me like a remarkably beautiful and fine thing; and I felt it an honor to be able to have even a slight share in it."

The Secretary had forwarded the class files, consisting of several hundred pounds of correspondence, pictures and historical matter; there were letters from each member of the class (many going back to 1896, the date of the first reunion, together with all kinds of newspaper clippings, data and memoranda) fastened together in chronological order, all this showing the good things the men had done; likewise, the bad; the latter clippings were not for the purpose of criticism but only to keep the records right.

J. W. Houder, the Assistant Secretary, who has always been a loyal and hard class worker, took charge of the files; he asked each member of the class who he would like to hear from and then handed to him the particular file for which he had asked. The reading of
the files proved to be very interesting; they had the life history of every man in their hands. For an hour or more there was no conversation; these lawyers, bankers, farmers, judges, big business men and high executives read and re-read of the successes and failures of their roommates and classmates.

The Secretary, after watching the deep interest taken in perusing those files, said he felt almost repaid for the unlimited time he had put in during the past forty-five years in assembling and filing it.

Report of Secretary-Treasurer given; balance $216.53; audited by Shepherd and Nieman.

Spears reported his visit with Gallup at Pomona, Calif.

The class called in a body and paid its regards to the Class Officers Council, found in session in the Union. This Association is just getting on its feet and Law '86 feels it is headed toward being a vital force in the Alumni Association. It is hoped that all classes not now in step will resolve any doubts in favor of the Council and give it a boost.

A picture was taken; and then the class went in a body to visit the Cook Law Library which was formally opened on June 15th, and were greeted by the librarian as the first class from any department to call.

The following correspondence with the new Prexy explains itself. Hope my letter meets with the approval of my classmates. No doubt many things said should have been left unsaid, and many things unsaid should have been said. But the fact remains I did the best I could.

It has been suggested that I send a copy to some of the friends of the University, in order that they may see how kindly we of more than forty-three years ago take to the new regime.

October 29, 1929.

Dr. Alexander Grant Ruthven,
President U. of M.
Ann Arbor, Mich.

My dear Dr. Ruthven:

I have two reasons for not writing you sooner: First, I knew you would be flooded with mail and telegrams immediately after your election; and, Second, I have been holding a continuous session of court at Cedar Rapids since Labor Day.

I am now writing you in a representative capacity. The law class of which I am a member entered Ann Arbor in the fall of 1884. President Emeritus Hutchins—then just an ordinary law professor—entered the law school as a lecturer at the same time. There were times when we were sorry he was alive. He lectured on equity jurisprudence; if there is a drier subject in the law I cannot remember
ever having heard it mentioned; but we sat at his feet for two years, and learned to love him.

The proper authorities let one hundred sixteen of us through on July first, 1886. It's fortunate for us (probably not so much for the people at large) that the University was not on quite such a high plane as it is now; if it had been, we might not have been passed. But since they did let us through we have been about as loyal as a class could be.

When we went back to our reunions, first we called on good old President Angell; then to be sure, Dr. Hutchins always welcomed us; and since he has become well along in years and thinks much in the past he claims that we never made him any trouble! That's fine. Then came Dr. Burton—we have one of the nicest letters from him that you ever saw; the class treasures it and keeps it in its archives. And then, at our last reunion, in 1926 we paid our respects to Dr. Little.

My father, a good old Irish Presbyterian, taught me to always stand by the preacher, right or wrong; he said he was right so much oftener than he was wrong that it was good policy. We don't expect you to be wrong; but we are going to be with you.

We are going back in 1931 for our 45th; then in 1936 for our 50th. And all of us who are alive will be there in 1937 for the 100th anniversary of the University.

We are widely scattered and have had more than the usual fatalities. Three are missing, wholly unaccounted for; probably dead. Fifty-six have passed to the great beyond. And only fifty-seven of us remain, eleven having passed away since June 1926. Statistics are not interesting, but I am simply reciting this to you so that you may know that we have kept accurate account of our class members. We have a correct roster and, with the exception of three, know where each one lives, what he is doing, whether married or single, and the members of his family. If deceased, we have the date of the death and the name of the cemetery where buried.

Personally I am proud of you because you are an Iowan. I am the only surviving Iowa member of our class.

The surviving members of the law class of '86, my dear Dr. Ruthven, wish you all the good things which may come to you as President of the grand old University, and we hold ourselves in readiness to respond to any command you may give. We refer you (without permission) to your assistant, Dr. Robbins; to Mr. Ottaway, President, or to Mr. Shaw or Mr. Tapping, Secretaries, of the Alumni Association.

Yours very sincerely,

M:H

JOHN T. MOFFIT,
Secy. Law '86, U. of M.
University of Michigan
President's Office
Ann Arbor, November 1, 1929.

My dear Judge Moffit:

I appreciate more than I can tell you your kind letter of October 29. I do hope that the Law Class of 1886 will continue to have the same personal relations with myself that it has had with my predecessors. Whenever you are back here upon the campus I should be more than pleased to have you call at the office so that we may get acquainted, and when I say you I mean not only yourself but the other members of '86 Law. There are not many classes that have preserved so strong and loyal a spirit as yours. It is one of the things that we are proud of.

With cordial personal greetings, I am

Yours sincerely,

AGR:PF
ALEXANDER G. RUTHVEN

The action of the Secretary in extending the glad hand to the new President of the University was, on motion of Mr. Shepherd of New York, unanimously approved by the class.

Archibald M. Blakely had been unaccounted for more than twenty-five years, and had been carried as such in the class records. The Secretary made report that after following many clues and writing a great number of letters—the files now show more than fifty—he had been located on July 30, 1930. Then letters were written to him; he was found to be in poor health; later his death was reported on February 5, 1931. This reduced the number of unaccounted for to two.

Dean Bates talked to us; told us about the W. W. Cook gifts, the Law Library, Hutchins Hall, and the Law Quadrangle.

The following is the list of those who have died since our 1926 reunion; Aldrich; Bleakley; Boyd; Creveling; Doe; Driggs; Garrigues; Luikin; W. A. F. May; E. C. Miller; McMillen; Ezra Smith; Tarpenning ......................... 13
Number deceased at 1926 reunion ........ 49
Unaccounted for ................................ 2
Living ........................................... 52

TOTAL ..................................................116

The records of the University show that the dividing line between the living and the dead is at 46 years; ours happened during our 44th year.

Telegrams were received from Richter, Gill and Brown Smith.

At this point Mr. Henry W. Webber, President of the Law Class of 1894, from New York did us the honor to call on us. He came from
Toledo where he had been on business.

To those of you who are not acquainted with Mr. Webber—he is the outstanding Class Secretary of all time. I know many of them; hear from many more; but Mr. Webber does more work, gets out more material, spends more time and gets less thanks for what he does than any of us. He remained for lunch with us and we invited him to come back and be our guest in 1936. During his luncheon talk he told us something about his class, and his troubles; many of them were somewhat similar to ours. He told us of fifteen members of his class who were alive—and he knew they were—who received his letters and the printed matter but who never took time to even drop him a postal card. He said that on meeting them personally they always expressed their deep appreciation of what he was doing, and how they read every word of what he sent out, and wished he would send more; and yet they didn't even write and verify their postoffice addresses.

Your Secretary, having been brought up in a Presbyterian family, was never taught to swear; but sometimes in going through the class files, and finding that some of the good brethren (and I might say also sister) have not even acknowledged receipt or a communication for more than five years—well, it almost makes him sore, and he wishes he could swear.

June 20, 1931. Saturday Morning

Roll call.

Breck and Avery reported they had arranged for a table at the Alumni luncheon.

The old officers who had served "since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary"—the Secretary having been elected June 30, 1898—were at the 40th anniversary (in 1926) elected for life or during good behavior—the question of good behavior to be submitted each five years.

On motion, in the absence of the officers who had been politely asked to withdraw, their behavior was approved and they were continued in office.

James A. Crawford, President;
W. J. Spears, Vice-President;
John T. Moffit, Secretary-Treasurer;
J. W. Houder, Assistant Secy.-Treas.

Much visiting.

Spears reported that he had attended the Aldrich funeral. Searl, Spears, Gardner and Merithew attended the E. L. Smith funeral. Incidentally much was made by the newspapers and the friends of Mr. Smith about the fact that four members of his law class, from widely different points, had been present at his funeral.
Nieman reported that since the last reunion Aldrich, Breck and E. L. Smith had visited him down in Ohio.

Mr. H. E. Hartman, Lit. '86, brother of our E. N. Hartman of South Bend, Indiana, called on us to bring word that our classmate was in ill health and could not come.

Alex Avery, '26 and Jim Dresbach, Lit '24 and Law '26, sons of their dads, visited us.

We had many calls from members of other classes who did us great honor.

12:15 P. M. The class went in a body to the Alumni luncheon.

On motion of Bannon it was resolved that a reunion be held in 1936—our 50th Anniversary—and that effort be made to have every living member present. Remember this; if you don't come it will not be the Secretary's fault; life is going to be made miserable for you.

Bannon was the first to leave; drove to Detroit.

Shepherd left by bus at 2:10 for Detroit; from there to Buffalo for an important engagement concerning the Oswego harbor.

Lincoln Avery at 2:30 left for Port Huron, expressing himself as greatly pleased with his visit.

Judge Searl took Mr. Houder and the Secretary for an hour's trip about the city. Oh! How it has grown; beautiful residences.

At 3:00 P. M. Judge and Mrs. Searl, Hazel and Mr. Bronson bid us goodbye and left for St. Johns.

At 3:00 P. M. we again gathered in the Betsy Barbour parlors; Dresbach, Nieman, Spears, Meeker, Crawford, Merithew, Miller, Crozier and Moffit; visiting; still extremely warm—94 degrees.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardner left for Lansing.

T. Hawley Tapping, General Secretary of the Alumni Association, called on Mr. Crawford whom he said had been a prince to the officers of the Alumni Association when they met in Memphis.

We had with us many, many pictures and home scenes of the different members and their families. Hours were spent in looking these over, and numerous were the stories that were told about the different ones who were recalled by the pictures.

The Secretary was elected a director of the Class Officers Council—a new organization—and directed by the class to attend the meetings on his own time and his own expense whenever it was possible for him to do so. The present outlook, on account of the distance from Tip: on to Ann Arbor, does not indicate that he will attend many meetings.

Crozier moved the adjournment.
Members have attended the different reunions as follows:

Aldrich—1906, 1911, 1916, 1921, 1926.
Andrews—1906.
Bannon—1926, 1931.
Boyd—1916, 1921, 1926.
Clary—1921.
Creveling—1911.
Doe—1926.
Dresbach—1921, 1926, 1931.
Dudley—1916, 1926.
Edgerton—1906.
Evans—1916, 1921.
Farrar—1926, 1931.
Gardner—1921, 1926, 1931.
Garrigues—1921, 1926.
Gill—1926.
Helmick—1921.
Hogg—1906, 1916.
Hooper—1916, 1926.
Humphrey—1921.
Huntsberger—1896, 1911, 1921.
Kline—1896.
Kraus—1911, 1916, 1926.
Lamison—1906.
Mason, W. L.—1906.
May, W. A. F.—1921, 1926.
Meeker—1906, 1921, 1931.
Miller, E. C.—1926.
Miller, Volney—1916, 1921, 1926, 1931.
Munn—1926.
McMillen—1906, 1916, 1921, 1926.
McNamara—1896, 1911, 1916.
Pickens—1926.
Prewitt—1916.
Richter—1926.
Scouton—1926.
Servis—1896.
Smith, Jas. G.—1931.
Talcott—1896, 1911.
Walser—1911, 1926.
Wright—1906.

Total—Year 1896 .......................................... 15
Total—Year 1906 ............................................. 24
Total—Year 1911 .......................................... 20
Total—Year 1916 ............................................. 30
Total—Year 1921 .......................................... 28
Total—Year 1926 .......................................... 36
Total—Year 1931 .......................................... 19

REMEMBER THE NEXT REUNION—1936

No formal dinner plans; every one looked out for himself.

8:00 P. M. Smith left.

9:00 P. M. Croziar, Nieman, Miller, Dresbach and his son Jim, Breck, Spears, Meeker and Moffit continued in session. They collected all the papers and files of the Secretary. Breck, from Jackson, waited until 10:15 and drove the President and Secretary to the train, carrying their grips and brief cases. Breck then continued on his way home—we watched out of the car window and saw him as the train passed him. This left Miller, Meeker, Nieman and Spears who were to leave on Sunday morning; Judge Dresbach and Jim were remaining over until the Commencement date—Monday.

This closed our most successful reunion. Everybody promised to come back in 1936. When I get time I will prepare the FORMAL MINUTES.

Let each member of this class write me a letter; we will then get up a "Gossip Letter," about each of you, consolidating it and send it out. It won't hurt you to take five minutes and write me.

And to the Friends; If you don't read this or any part of it you will have saved a lot of time and not missed much.

Mr. Crawford, our President, has not had an opportunity to read this letter, but he says he will approve of what has been said without having it sent to him for correction; so if any of you live in Memphis, don't throw anything at him.

JOHN T. MOFFIT,
Secretary, Law '86.