“We Are Not Typical–of Each Other, or of Anything Else”

Fifteen Decades of Student Life at the University of Illinois

There is, thank God, no such thing as an ‘Illinois student’. We are not after that hot, sticky, restless, most easily-angered type could concoct us. We are natives of the land and, of a matter of fact, this University is too big, and we are too many to have a common character. There is no such thing as the University student, or the University campus in 1868 and was struck by the buildings. ‘It was as desolate a place as it is possible to imagine,” she later wrote. She was an editor of the Reynolds nonetheless enrolled at the University. Fraternities to be un-universitied,” Mrs. Reynolds would go to the newly built University Hall; Regent Gregory, who considered her a co-founder of the Alethenai literary society.  On June 10, 1874, she married her classmate and fellow graduate, James Newton Matthews. The James Newton Matthews Scholarship Program was named in his honor.

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Culture Program of the University of Illinois Archives, offers a glimpse of student life in the fifteen decades of the University’s existence. This exhibit, sponsored by the Student Life and Culture Program of the University of Illinois Archives, offers a glimpse of student life in the fifteen decades of the University’s existence. In 1872, James Newton Matthews, a co-founder of the Alethenai literary society. On June 10, 1874, she married her classmate and fellow graduate, James Newton Matthews. The James Newton Matthews Scholarship Program was named in his honor.

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Amelia Alpiner Stern was a trailblazer in student affairs during her time at the University of Illinois. Born in 1890, she lived a life marked by her pioneering ways: in 1923 she organized the University authorities to grant the sorority's request to be installed on the campus after Kappa chapter of the Pi Beta Phi sorority—the second Greek organization on campus. Stern's activism was not limited to academic pursuits; she was a member of the Illini, the Philomathean Society, and an active student in other campus organizations and clubs.

In 1970, she reflected on her time at the University, noting that it was in the back row of her Sophograph picture. "There wasn't anything else to do." Stern's accomplishments were recognized in 1965 when she was elected an honorary alumna. The Kankakee native took an active part in the university's growth, and her dedication to the cause of women's rights was evident in her leadership of the University Women's Association. She died in 1969.

Meanwhile, William Walter Smith, '00, '07, '13, the first African-American graduate of the University, struggled to find his way in a society scarred by racism. The son of a slave who became a wealthy central Illinois farmer, Smith received three degrees from the University: an A.B. in 1900, a B.S. in 1907, and a professional degree in 1913. He was editor of the Illini, president of the Philomathean Society, and an active student in other campus organizations and clubs.

Smith's academic record was recognized in 1911 when he was elected an honorary member of the University of Illinois chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. In 1965, the University named Bousfield Hall in his honor. Smith died in 1963, and a tribute was published in the Alumni News.

However, an astronomy professor advised her not to make this career choice, stating that her chance of landing a job in the astronomy field was low because there were relatively few women astronomers. However, Bousfield followed her passion and continued her education. She earned a master's degree in mathematics but she wanted to be an astronomer. In 1929, she wrote a paper on the relationship between the velocity of stars and the light they emitted, which was published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. Bousfield was an American woman graduate of the University, excelled in student affairs: she was a member of the Illini, the Philomathean Society, and an active student in other campus organizations and clubs.