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RULES AND REGULATIONS OF OLD TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY 52

August 10, 1935



RULES AND REGULATIONS OF OLD TRANSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY

"Transylvania" is an interesting word, yet still more interesting than the word itself is a study of the history of Transylvania Seminary, or Transylvania University, as it was later called, which had its beginning at a perilous time in history, about 155 years ago, when Kentucky was still a part of Virginia.

A thorough examination of old newspapers, histories, scrapbooks, and magazines relating to this subject will prove invaluable in giving one a much deeper insight into the customs of this school, and the rules and regulations that prevailed in Transylvania from its birth on down through the years.

Strange, indeed, would it seem to us, in 1935, if a certain sum of money to be used for the erection of a school building should be raised by lottery. In 1790 the Virginia Legislature passed this act: "Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that it shall and may be lawful for the trustees of Transylvania Seminary, or a majority of them, to raise by one or more lotteries, a sum not exceeding five hundred pounds, for the purpose of erecting an academy."¹ Contributions amounting to \$10,000 were also received for the school.¹ Thus, Transylvania began its colorful history.

¹ Crimson Rambler, April 3, 1930.

Henning's Statutes, Vol. 13, page 173 - Chap. XLVI.

See also page 147, 180, 291

Before the school building was completed, records show that "the first session of Transylvania was held in the double log-cabin of Rev. David Rice, near Crow Station in Lincoln County. The first students wore coon-skin caps and deer-skin breeches and carried to school with them their flint-lock rifles to be ready for an Indian attack."

The Trustee Records for November 24, 1784, give us the following information about the tuition of Transylvania: "Resolved that the price of tuition to be at the price four pistols (Twenty dollars) by the year for each student, to be paid quarterly." The statement that one-half the tuition might be paid in tobacco, corn or pork, was also found.

Transylvania's first commencement was held in 1790. The following announcement, which was taken from the Kentucky Gazette, April 1790, give us an idea of the development of the school: "Friday the 10 inst. was appointed for the examination of the students of the Transylvania Seminary by the Trustees. In the presence of a very respectable audience several excellent speeches were delivered by the boys and in the evening a tragedy acted and the whole concluded with a farce. The several masterly strokes of eloquence throughout the performance obtained general

applause and were acknowledged by a universal clap from all present. The good order and decorum observed throughout the whole, together with the rapid progress of the school in literature reflects very great honor on the President."

In the Kentucky Gazette, December 14, 1793, is found this announcement concerning the enlargement of Transylvania's curriculum: "The Transylvania Seminary is now well supplied with teachers of Natural and Moral Philosophy, of the Mathematics, and of the learned languages. An english teacher is also introduced into the Colledge, who teaches, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and the English Grammar. In this School great attention is paid to the Reading; and that not confined to prose authors only, but to the Poet.--This Seminary is the best feat of education on the Western waters; and it is to be hoped, the time is not far distant when even prejudice itself will not think it necessary to transport our Youth to the Atlantic States, to compleat their educations.

"Good boarding may be had in Lexington and its vicinity, on very moderate terms."

Another issue of the same newspaper, the Kentucky Gazette, elaborates upon this same subject in these words: "The Transylvania Seminary is now well organized for the

instruction of Youth. In this Seminary will be taught the Latin and Greek Classics, Mathematics, Natural and Moral Philosophy, History, and some of the Fine Arts, as Oratory and Criticism. The Trustees have introduced into the Seminary an English Teacher of a superior kind, who is to be under the direction of the President and will receive Scholars of any age, and teach them to Read, Write, Common Arithmetic and the English Grammar. This Teacher is well versed in many branches of the Mathematics, and will receive Students in any such branches, whose parents do not commit them to the immediate instruction of the President. The Presidency of the Colledge is committed to Mr. Harry Toulmin, whose qualifications for, and experience in such business, induce the most flattering expectations. The Morals of the Youth shall be strictly attended to.

"The tuition money for the Students taught by the President, (who is authorized to receive Students of any description) is Four Pounds per Annum, payable half yearly for those under the care of the English teacher, Forty Shillings per Annum, payable half yearly also.--Boarding may be had in Lexington and its vicinity, for any number of boys, on moderate terms.

	John Coburn	:	
		:	Comm.
(Signed)	James Parker	:	of
		:	Trustees"
	John Breckinridge	:	

The enlargement surely had its effect, for in 1794 the curriculum of Transylvania equalled that of any college in America.⁴

The following statement, which was taken from the Trustee Records, 1797, might serve as an incentive to some ambitious person who is anxious to work to pay his tuition: "Agreement with Mrs. Catherine Richardson, steward, to diet, wash and mend for the scholars and professors and visitors to the college at 15 pounds a year. (Found about \$3.33). A new outdoor oven under strong lean-to was to be built for her use. A new well must be dug. She is to be allowed the right to make a garden and cover-lot."

As far back as 1797 the subject "Weather" was as much in style as it is now, as these few words show: "On account of the excessive cold weather of the past week it will be necessary to erect a stove and pipe in the recitation rooms at the University."⁴

Then, too, in 1797, there were those students who might have had an inward desire to display their dramatic ability, but, alas! they were doomed to defeat because of the rule that "no student of the Transylvania Seminary is to take part in any Theatrical performance of any kind."⁵

⁴ Crimson Rambler, April 3, 1930.

⁵ Trustee Records, March 1, 1797.

This rule was passed in 1798: "Religious services to be held daily at sunrise and all students required to attend under penalty of confinement to their rooms."⁶

In the Kentucky Gazette, August 7, 1799, appeared this announcement: "Resolved that the students in the University above the age of fourteen years, upon paying at the rate of two and a half Dollars per Annum into the hands of the Treasurer, one half in advance, shall be entitled to the use of all the Books belonging to the Library thereof, under the direction of the President, except such Books as may be denominated Book of Science, and may be necessary for the use of the Professors, and also the Classics;

"Provided, nevertheless, That it shall be at the discretion of the President to admit boys under the above specified age to the use of the Books if he shall judge it to be to their advantage."⁷

The following extract from the Record Book of the Trustees gives us a glimpse of the domestic arrangement of the new University: "April 12, 1799. Resolved, that it shall be the duty of the Steward to observe the following rules in his conduct in the University:

*1. He shall serve up breakfast at eight o'clock,

⁶ Trustee Records, October 1798.

⁷ Peter, Transylvania University--Its Origin, Rise Decline, and Fall, p. 81.

dinner at one o'clock, and supper at seven o'clock, and that it shall not be his duty to spread a cloth at any other time.

"2. He shall keep his doors open until eight o'clock at night, and that after that time his doors shall be shut, and it shall be at his discretion whether he open his house to those who keep irregular hours, unless the student is absent by special permit from the teachers."⁸

The following rules were also passed in 1799:

"Boarding at the University is 15 pounds a year. This sum includes diet, washing, and mending of the students clothes. They furnishing their own bedding, candles, and fire wood for their own apartments. One of the teachers will reside in the house, consequently proper attention will be paid⁹ their morals."

"Study hours at the University to be from Sunrise to 8; 9 to 12; 2 to 3:30."¹⁰

"Students shall not play at cards, dice or any unlawful game, nor frequent places of licentious amusement nor shall they bring any spiritous or fermented liquors into the college."¹¹

In 1800 these rules were put into effect:

"Students shall not go to Taverns under any circumstances

⁸ Peter, Transylvania University--Its Origin, Rise, Decline, and Fall, p. 81.

⁹ Trustee Records, September 10, 1799.

¹⁰ Trustee Records, 1799..

¹¹ Trustee Records, November 4, 1799.

either for drinks or free lunches. A student found in such a place shall be immediately dealt with in the most severe manner. Notice shall be sent to parents or guardians of
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said offenders."

"Parents are earnestly requested to be very sparing
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in granting money to their sons."

The following statement throws some light on the manners of the students in 1810: "Be it ordained that the Professors be required to exact from the students a more respectful deportment; that no student shall be permitted to have his hat on his head in the University in the presence of the Trustees or Professors; that the students, when they leave the hall or room of recitation, be compelled to do it in an orderly manner, and to make their respects to the presiding Professors; and when they are reciting at any public examination, the classes must be compelled to
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stand up without leaning on each other."

These records do not show a high degree of popularity or efficiency on the part of the management of the institution at this period.

The Trustee Records, September 8, 1827, state that "Board and Lodging at \$1.50 per week, students to furnish bedding, fire-wood, candles, common chairs, and to have their own washing done. Negro laborers' wives suggested

12 Trustee Records, October 1800.

13 Peter, Transylvania University--Its Origin, Rise, Decline, and Fall, p. 92.

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as possible washers."

The standard meal as passed by the Board for the students of Transylvania in 1827 was as follows:

"Breakfast--coffee, milk, wheat or corn bread, butter, also either beefsteak, muttonchops, bacon or salt meat. Dinner--wheat or corn bread, two varieties of meat, either fresh or salt meat, soup and three kinds of vegetables. Foultry when abundant twice a week. Supper--Tea, Milk, wheat or corn bread, butter, corn mush."

The very peculiar rule that "Negro Billy (hired man) be given clothes he should have had last year" was recorded in the Trustee Records, September 8, 1827."

On September 15, 1827, the following rules and regulations relative to the Refectory were adopted:

Section I

"1. Students of Transylvania University will in the future live in college buildings and board in the Refectory.

"2. Professors alternately to preside at each meal to also try to keep order during the meals as well as in the sleeping buildings. All misdemeanors are to be reported to the President.

"3. Breakfast at 7:00 a.m.

14 Trustee Records, September 8, 1827.

15 Trustee Records, September 1827.

Dinner at 2:00 p.m.

Supper at Sunset

"4. Each student required to be prompt at all meals."

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In the Trustee Records, October 8, 1827, is found this very amusing announcement relative to the dress of the students at Transylvania: "Resolved that from and after the 1st day of November and until the 1st day of May in each year the students be required on all occasions upon their appearance in the lecture rooms, and all other places within the limits of the town of Lexington except in their respective rooms, to appear draped in coat and pantaloons of blue minced jeans or cassenette with black cord or binding along the outer seams of the pantaloons, along the legs; with a small black ribbon rose about the size of a half dollar fastened on the collar of the coat in front on the right side; a plain grey cloth cap with leatherened frontispiece will on all occasions be required to be worn in place of a hat. Between the 1st day of May and the 1st day of November of each year they will be permitted to appear on similar occasions in dress above described, or in lieu thereof, a blue cotton coat or pantaloons with similar trimmings and a straw or leghorn hat in place of a cap, during the latter period. The use of a pair of pumps or shoes alone will be required during the whole time."

In 1829 the following rules were passed:

"No system of pecuniary rewards or corporal punishment in the institution--Its honors constitute its rewards; admonishment, suspension and expulsion its only punishments.

Students are requested to attend at college as early as they can see to read in the mornings, except during the summer, sunrise is the time the exercises will commence." 17

"Students required on Sabbath to refrain from usual exercises or diversions, from playing on any musical instruments except to perform part of the sacred psalmody, and from anything that is unbecoming the retirement and sacredness of the day. Students enjoined to attend some place of public worship." 18

"No student shall entertain company in his rooms without permission or make any festival entertainments either in town of Lexington or in the College." 18

"If any student shall fight a duel or accept or send a challenge or be a second in a duel or in any way aid or abet it--or abuse a fellow-student for refusing to fight or be concerned in a duel he shall be immediately expelled." 18

It seems that the professors of Transylvania University were very interested in the conduct of the students there and were always ready to add new rules for the students to observe. In the Catalogue of 1866 there are

17 Trustee Records, January 1, 1829.

18 Trustee Records, July 6, 1829.

17 specific rules of conduct for students, such as the following:

"5. That he attend no exhibition of immoral tendency; no race-field, theatre, circus, billiard-saloon, bar-room, or tippling house.

"6. That he neither keep in his possession, nor use fire-arms, a dirk, a bowie-knife, nor any other kind of deadly weapon.

"9. That he attend public worship every Lord's day, and prayers in the Chapel every morning.

"17. That he sign no petition or other paper to the Board or Executive Committee in regard to the government of the University, or to the appointment or dismissal of Professors or officers; and that he do not attend or give countenance to any meeting to criticize the government of the University."¹⁹

"These 17 rules of conduct stood in every catalogue from 1866 until President Jenkins became president (1901), who decided that the general principle of becoming conduct is sufficient, with specific applications left to the consciences and mature judgments of faculty and students."¹⁹

From all the rules, announcements, and statements that have been given in this paper, one can gain a fair

¹⁹ Crimson Rambler, April 3, 1930.

idea of the college and its laws from its beginning down to the year 1866. It is needless to say that as many more rules have been made and recorded in the school records of Transylvania since 1866 as were made previous to 1866. It is true that to us in 1935 some of the rules seem somewhat odd and old-fashioned; in 2090, or 155 years from the present, will not the rules and regulations that are being made and recorded now seem just as strange and out-of-date? I wonder!



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