

**William James Battle**  
1870-1955

William James Battle was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, November 30, 1870, of a family well known in the State. In 1877 his father, having become President of the University of North Carolina, moved to Chapel Hill and William grew up there. Graduating with the class of 1888, he took further work in the Graduate School and in 1888-90 was Instructor in Latin. From 1890 to 1893 he studied Classics at Harvard, holding a Thayer Scholarship for one year and, a Morgan Fellowship for two, and receiving the degree of A.M. in 1891 and Ph.D. in 1893. In due course he received three honorary degrees: D.C.L. from the University of the South in 1922 and LL.D. from Southwestern University in 1929 and from the University of North Carolina in 1940.

In September of 1893 he came to The University of Texas as Associate Professor of Greek in charge of the School, as the Department was then called. In 1898 he was made Professor, in 1908 Dean of the College of Arts, in 1911 Dean of the Faculty, in 1914 Acting' President.

In response to a Recognition given to him by Dean Parlin at the 1943 Commencement, Dr. Battle said: "Yes, it is fifty years next September since I joined the faculty of The University of Texas. We, were young together, the University and I: the University was only, ten years old; I was twenty-two. — The faculty of twenty-five has become nearly five hundred. The campus of forty acres is enlarged to two hundred and ten. — The library has grown from twelve thousand volumes to seven hundred and fifty thousand. In 1893 we had just three and three-quarter buildings: three quarters of the Main Building, a tiny Chemistry laboratory, B. Hall without its wings and fourth story, and Heating Plant. Now, the Registrar's Campus Plan shows fifty-two. In this development I am proud to have had a share."

The God of the destinies of men and institutions allowed that fifty-year period of mutual growth to continue for another full decade, and two years more when because of failing strength Dr. Battle returned, to his native North Carolina in order that his ashes might, there mingle with the dust of his illustrious ancestors.

Like Caesar's Gaul, Dr. Battle's great contributions to the University may be divided into three parts. His first and long-lasting love was teaching. In this he was a master. He had, to begin with, sound and solid learning; he had also that, sine qua non of the teacher, the ability to create team-work between teacher and taught with learning the end product. A genuine interest in the lives of the learners protected him forever from the desiccation of a Chaucer's Clerk of Oxford or a Browning's Grammarian.

This loyalty to learning led naturally to an interest in the conditions or machinery of the process. In the very first year he got into administrative work through appointment as a member of the Committee on Class-Hours and Rooms. Soon this willing worker found himself taking an active part in almost every phase of University life. He edited the Catalogue and the University Record, managed admission and registration of students, supervised the affiliation of high schools, and served as chairman of many committees. He was founder and for seven years manager of the University-Cooperative Society. He was a leader in the establishment of the University Club and was its first President. He had an abiding interest in The University of Texas chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and represented the Chapter at several Triennial Conventions. He was chairman of the committee that organized the College of Fine Arts and was influential in the selection of its original staff. \*He probably represented the University at more meetings and ceremonies than any other faculty member. He is credited with the catalogue requirement that no student should graduate who is not able to write clear and correct English.

Another characteristic of Dr. Battle was his intensely religious nature. He, was a devout member of the Episcopal Church, serving for a great many years as a senior warden of All Saints Chapel and recording its history in a book: "The Story of All Saints Chapel, 1900-1950." He was many times delegate to the Annual Council of the Diocese of Texas; ten times deputy to the Triennial General Convention; member of the Committees of the House of Deputies of the General Convention of program and budget, prayer book, constitution; member of the

---

\* He designed the official University seal and clothed it with a wealth of symbolism

Joint Commission of General Convention oil Social Reconstruction and member of the Standing Liturgical Commission.

In all his varied activities as teacher, administrator, churchman, and citizen, Dr. Battle's first love was Greek. He taught freshmen and doctoral candidates with equal enthusiasm. That his students cherished their association *with him* is attested by the affection which many of them felt for him, as shown by their correspondence with him and their visits to his office, even many years after their student days.

In the course of years he accumulated a magnificent personal library of some 15,000 volumes. It is especially strong in Greek and Latin literature, Greek archeology, and books on travel in Italy and Greece. Among the authors he built up an uncommonly fine collection on Homer, Virgil, and Horace, including texts, commentaries, translations, and interpretive works. He was always amazingly generous in permitting colleagues and friends, and even students, to borrow his books. Most fittingly this collection has been left to the University and will remain in the handsome room, which was especially designed to house it on the 27th floor of the Tower.

Towering over these multifarious services was his chairmanship of the Faculty Building Committee to which he gave himself wholeheartedly for over a quarter of a century. In recognition of this conspicuous service the Board of Regents, on April 30, 1948, presented to Dr. Battle an elaborately inscribed and signed scroll. Beginning with a detailed multiphased preamble the scroll concludes: "Be. It Resolved", that we the Regents of The University of Texas, express publicly to Dr. William James Battle the appreciation and gratitude both of ourselves and of the people of Texas for what he has wrought. It has been the privilege of few men to serve their beloved University so long and so well. Everywhere on the Main Campus we have evidences of his handiwork. The beautiful buildings and the attractively planned grounds, which he has had such a responsible part in bringing into being, will long stand as a living monument to his good taste and his sense of the harmonious and beautiful. These will serve, as he has wished *on into the* unforeseeable future - as a powerful influence in the lives of those who will come after us. In grateful appreciation we, the Regents, extend to him this acknowledgement of his outstanding accomplishments through years of unselfish service to this institution."

In testimony herewith is a list of the projects and the dates of their completion: Biology Building, 1924; Garrison Hall, 1925; Biology Greenhouse, 1926; Alice Littlefield Dormitory, 1927; Power Plant, 1927; Gregory Gymnasium, 1929; Littlefield Memorial Entrance, 1931; Women's Activity Building (Gymnasium), 19-31; San Jacinto Boulevard (Campus Section), 1931; Chemistry Building, 1932; Engineering Building, 1932; Student Union Building, 1932; Hogg Memorial Auditorium, 1932; Home Economics Building, 1932; Geology Building, 1932; Architecture Building, 1932; New Library (First Unit), 1932; Brackenridge Hall, 1932; University Junior High School, 1933; University of Texas Development Plan of 1933; Main Building and Library Extension, 1936; Roberts Hall, 1936; Jessie Andrews Dormitory, 1936; Prather Hall, 1937; Carothers Dormitory, 1937; Texas Memorial Museum, 1937; Home Economics Tea House, 1939; Hill, Hall (Athletic Dormitory), 1939; Music Building, 1942; Petroleum Engineering Building, 1942; Chemical Engineering Building, 1942; Mustang Memorial, 1948; Experimental Science Building, 1952; Student Health Center, 1952. If, within these handsome halls, the spirit of academic freedom abides today, it, too, owes much to Dr. Battle. His courageous stand in the famous fight with Governor Ferguson, 1915-1917, resulted eventually in freeing the University from the fear of complete political control. Even his apparent self-sacrifice in withdrawing to go to the University of Cincinnati resulted in renewed and increased efforts on the part of the friends of the University.

Dr. Battle was a member of: American Philological Association, Archeological Institute of America, Classical Association of the Middle West and South (president 1929-1930), American Hellenic Society (London), Texas Historical Association, Texas Fine Arts Association (President 1920-1929), Texas Philosophical Society (President 1911), Texas Classical Association, Phi Beta Kappa, Zeta Psi.

Clubs: University, The Town and Gown, Harvard, Scholia.

Author: The Story of All Saints Chapel, 1900-1950.

Co-author: The Battle Book.

Editor: Memories of an Old-Time Tar Heel by Kemp Battle.

Contributor: articles and pamphlets.

Dr. Battle will be an outstanding figure in the history of this University. Indeed, a generous part of it is his story. He was one of the most able of the Founding Fathers. To a young frontier institution of learning, famous now for its great endowment of material wealth, he brought a far greater store of spiritual wealth. If Austin is sometimes called the Athens of the Southwest the reference is in no small measure due to the fact that the spirit and ideals of the Greeks were early transported to and made manifest on this campus by this student and lover of the life and folk of ancient Athens.

He was pioneer and promoter of many phases of the affairs of the young institution. A man of great ability and strong convictions he was apt to be a bit impatient with opposition. But beneath a certain air of austerity there lurked a most lovable nature, evidenced over the years by the great measure of respect and affection accorded him on every hand. The Athenians would have sacrificed a ram to his memory.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors L. L. Click, H. R. Leon, and T. S. Painter.