

# The Cornerstone

SUMMER 2008

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

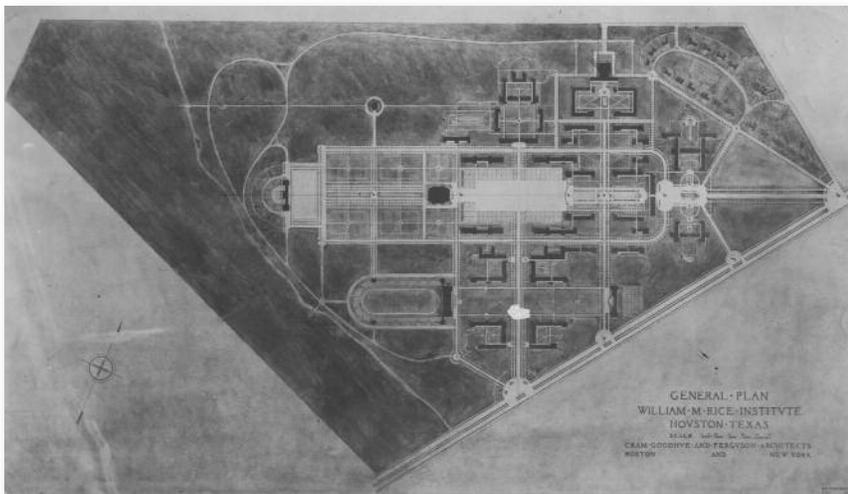
VOL. 13, NO. 3

## Rice Before the Buildings

by Karen Hess Rogers

It is difficult to imagine the Rice campus without a single building and with very few trees, but approximately a hundred years ago the trustees of the institute were in negotiations to purchase the tract that was to become one of the

most beautiful universities in the nation. These photos show the “before” picture. Any visitor to the Rice campus today will appreciate what has been accomplished with meaningful planning and design.



### Early Master Plan for the Rice campus

The major east-west axis begins at what is now Entrance One (point at far right of campus plan). The administration building (now Lovett Hall) straddled this axis. In front of the administration building were plans for a women's dormitory and a fine arts complex. In the northeast corner of the campus, faculty residences and a president's house were planned. To the west of the administration building were parallel rows of buildings opening to a central square. On the west of the square, interrupting the main axis, an auditorium was envisioned. There were four cross-axes. At the north end of the fourth was an observatory. This cross-axis bisected the Persian gardens and ran into the stadium on the south. Men's dormitories were arranged on the south part of the campus along a mall parallel to the main axis with the gym and stadium to the west and a student commons on the east.

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## The Rice Institute Site

Completed, the site had five sides, bounded by what are today Main Street, Sunset and Rice Boulevards, Greenbriar Street, and University Boulevard. There was a bayou, Harris Gully, to be known by students as “the Blue Danube,” cutting across the western end; today this waterway is channeled through a conduit under the parking lot of the football stadium. The site was flat, marshy and subject to flooding. Trees and shrubs lined the bayou, and there was a small grove of trees near the intersection of Main and Sunset. Otherwise, the site was bare prairie land.

Excerpted from *A History of Rice University, the Institute Years, 1907-1963* by Fredericka Meiners



Harris Bayou (Harris Gully) from Main Street

# The Rice Historical Society

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*To collect and preserve for the future the  
history of Rice University*

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*The Rice Historical Society welcomes letters to  
The Cornerstone, its official newsletter.  
Rice alumni and friends are encouraged to  
contribute photographs and remembrances of  
historical interest that may be used in future issues  
of The Cornerstone. Items cannot  
be returned and will be donated to our  
archival collection.*

Newsletter designed by Starfall Graphics.

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*Looking east to Main Entrance Gates on Main Street*

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### RHS ARCHIVES NOTE

*Our archives are **not** classified. We are seeking artifacts you may have preserved, then hidden away, since your years at Rice.*

*If you would like to give that hat or banner or dance card to the Rice Historical Society to be preserved at the Woodson Research Center or in the RHS archive collection, please contact Joyce Nagle, RHS archivist, at 713-782-0703.*

# A Rice Freshman, 1915–1916

Excerpts from letters to Miss Gainor Roberts, 806 South Willomet, Dallas, Texas  
from Otto Eisenlohr, Rice Institute

*September 5, 1915*

This is Saturday morning; classes will not begin until Monday at 8:30. I am feeling fine; also having a fine time—don't know what it will be like when lessons start. The buildings here certainly are pretty but not white as I thought they were going to be. I have a fine



*Otto Hugo Eisenlohr*  
1917

room and roommate; at least I like him so far.... We have breakfast at 7:00, dinner at 12:45 and supper at 6:15. They give us good grub and we can eat all we want, much to my delight. Adjoining the dining room, there is a small hall and next to this is the boys' club room, a big long room with piano and Victrola, plenty of chairs and tables. We have here a school band; they practice every morning and every evening on the third floor in the

same building that I am in. It sure is swell. There are a couple of sophomores that room next to me; one of them has a mandolin and he is playing "Home Sweet Home" now. I don't know whether he is homesick or not; he is always playing sentimental pieces any way. This place sure has a swell campus and when it is lit up at night it looks just like a park.

The first football game comes off with Trinity U. a week from today. They have three teams working out every evening here. I never heard of hazing at this school until I got here. Well, they sure have it. Besides having to clean up my own room, if some sophomore gets a notion he don't want to clean up his, he'll get a "freshie." They have only gotten me once. The sophs next door to me put me on the "ropes" and I have gotten off pretty easy so far. But I guarantee that I can roll a moth ball with my nose faster than any of our crowd. I have had to say involuntary speeches and sing "songs" and if a person gets out of tune, woe be unto him. They made some of the boys put their noses together and whistle as loud as they could, and, if they laughed, they got a good strapping.

The school is three miles from town; a car line runs about two blocks from the dormitory. Well, we came back around 10:00 [p.m.] and, sitting upon the gate posts, are six... "freshies" put there by the sophs. I thought sure my time had come but I got by safely and beat it for my room... I walked over to the administration building this morning and there, sitting on the posts, were more "fish." They had to bow to all the ladies that came in.

*October 10, 1915*

I just got through ironing... what used to be your handkerchief. It sure did make me homesick. A person might think they won't get homesick, but when they get way out in this neck of the woods they will sure change their mind. This afternoon a few of us boys went Kodaking. Most of the bunch had gone to town so we didn't get to take any group pictures. It has been pretty cold here the last week. I've got an awful cold now. I am having to study pretty hard. There sure is a fine bunch of profs here. They are sociable just like the teachers [in] high school. German is about my easiest subject. I have 3 boys here that I practically tutor during spare time but it's more fun than work. Biology is very interesting but I won't tell you what we have to do. I have had to buy a pair of dissecting instruments - you can guess the rest. Chemistry is merely a review of last year's work, just a little more in detail. English is a repetition of Rhetoric which we had in high school together with theme writing. Trig is \_\_\_ It isn't a repetition of anything. If I get through trig I'll be willing to do most anything... Hazing is as usual. I got a strapping the other day for sitting between two girls in chemistry lecture. The upperclassmen told me to move but I wouldn't do it so I had to take the consequences. There was a big dance out here at the school last night. The freshmen had to carry all the tables and benches out of the dining room, sweep the floor and clean up in general and the worst part of it was we had to put the tables and benches back this [Sunday] morning before we got any breakfast... I just received an order to go to church tonight or get dumped in the bayou. I went to church this morning and I don't want to go again. So I'll either have to hide

out, go to bed, to church or in the bayou. Time alone will tell what is going to happen...A bunch of us boys play tennis down here every day. They have four courts for the boys and four for the girls. The boys generally use all of them. Went to a picture show Saturday and saw Charlie Chaplin—Shanghaied—I never laughed so hard since I left Dallas.

### *December 1, 1915*

I went through what was said to be my last hazing as a Freshman tonight. I was the second freshman to be initiated into the “Order of the Yellow Dog”...tonight’s experience was a climax. I was first blindfolded and then walked for a quarter of a mile, strapped, had to get on my knees and swear to a whole bunch of junk and then they poured ice water on me. The best part of it was that I got to stay and see the other fellows get theirs. I’m used to the strapping. It didn’t hurt but the ice water scared the life out of me.

### *January 3, 1916*

I am back again and goodness knows I wish I was gone again. This is a homesick bunch around here today. I thought I could get along without being homesick, being on to the “ropes” and knowing practically everybody. I felt all right until I walked through those big old gates. Then I saw five months staring me in the face and I just gave way.

Nineteen persons are ineligible to return to school. They failed in more than half their work. Fourteen of these were freshmen and five were sophomores. I didn’t fail in anything but I didn’t do as good as I would like to.

### *January 8, 1916*

Today is Saturday and a pretty light day. I have two regular classes this morning and my biology prof is going to give four of us a special lecture in Bugs every Saturday morning because he says we have shown ourselves to be interested in the work. Tonight we are going to have a basketball game with East Texas Normal who have already beaten A&M. This is the first athletic sport of any kind since November 29. Last night we had a big rally and things seemed kind of natural. The band was out strong and they sure did play some music before, between and after yell practice.

### *January 15, 1916*

I am and am not getting over homesickness. I am afraid that it is an everlasting disease.

The band is practicing again tonight. We have another basketball game tomorrow night with

Southwestern Last Saturday we won 60-15...you ought to hear the racket going on now. They are playing “Hail, Hail” and “There’ll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight.”

It sure has been cold down here for the last week. It rained Tuesday and, before night, wherever there was standing water, it was covered with ice.

We had a grub fight tonight. They didn’t give us anything for supper but chile, spuds and beans. Things were quiet until everybody got a taste of the chile and then spuds began flying freely. Everybody—even some of the profs—crawled under the tables. Finally they all started waving their napkins as a sign of truce. Maybe we will get something to eat tomorrow.

### *January 29, 1916*

Am going down to see *The Battle Cry of Peace* tomorrow night...There are so many picture shows now that I don’t know which ones to go to. Then there are basketball games and, by Jove, I can’t go to town over two nights a week.

Sunday, if the weather is good, my roommate, another boy and myself are going down to the ship channel and then going over to the San Jacinto Battlegrounds. I hope it is pretty because I want to take some pictures. I never have seen a very big ocean going vessel and there is one down there now.

Next week we start qualitative analysis in chemistry lab. Have been having lectures in it all week and, Gainor, I declare I never saw such equations.

### *February 2, 1916*

Thank goodness Rice is not eleven miles from the village of Houston. We are only five miles from the Rice Hotel which is considered the center of the business district. By Jove, that’s far enough. It takes forty-five minutes or more to get into town.

Did you know that if one of your fingers was amputated it could still itch? Well, it’s an established fact.

It is now 12:15 [a.m.] I together with ten others missed the last car to the Institute and consequently had to walk.

### *February 19, 1916*

I haven’t been to church for two Sundays and don’t think I’ll go tomorrow. I had a talk with my “Bugs” prof the other day on Evolution and I’ll swan if I didn’t get into the blamest mix-up. I think I knew less when I got through than when I started. War and Religion are favorite subjects of argument in this room.

I just wish you could be here one time for supper just before a big game. There is very little eating done—but there sure is lots of noise. Then the band begins to play our college medley. Something is going to happen, that's all. If we win tonight [against A&M], which we are, we've got to beat Texas Monday in order to claim the state championship. Watch the Rice Owls go!

### *February 25, 1916*

Oh! That dinged old Rice-State game sure made us all feel bad for awhile. State was ahead when the game first started...they were behind all the rest of the game until 1½ minutes at the end where, on a foul and free throw they got one point ahead. If it hadn't been for the dance I don't know what would have happened. We danced until two o'clock when we came back out to the school; about fifteen of us got the night watchman to let us into the kitchen. We ate all the refreshments that were left and then went to bed at four o'clock.

Last week we like to tore things up around here. We have a night watchman who thinks he's a whole lot more than he is and he talks just like a girl. About six of us started [talking] just like he did. Well, the crowd kept growing. Do you remember those guns I told you about? Well, they are kept in an empty room just across from mine but they keep the door locked. But some of the boys crawled in the window and got six guns. Two of the boys got at one end of the building, two at another and one of each side in the middle. The crazy watchman tries to follow up the fellows that do the shooting so, when they all got ready, they shot one at a time and the old watchman didn't know which way to go. When he started making rounds they poured water on him and about every five minutes those boys would shoot those old army rifles... We kept this up until eleven o'clock and when he went to this office we roped his door and kept him in there until after twelve o'clock.

I hate to think about it but in two weeks finals will be here. The second term ends on March 18. If I get through all right then it's only two and a half months 'til packing time.

### *March 4, 1916*

Freshmen are going to have a boat ride and dance the night of the 18th. We are going down to the bayou somewhere on a big steamer. Here's hoping I don't get seasick.

### *March 11, 1916*

I like this school better every day although there are times when things seem to grow old and stale yet something always happens to keep the ball rolling. A boy who has the opportunity to go to college and doesn't go doesn't know what he has missed.

Don't for a minute think that we get anything good to eat down here: spuds, chicken bones, spuds, bacon—"menus" for breakfast, dinner and supper.

### *March 18, 1916*

Wish you could have gone on the field trip the biology class made this afternoon. It rained hard as mischief and the girls looked like drowned rats... We sure got some specimens though. I won't tell you what their real names are but just call them wasps, ants, scorpions..., snakes, salamanders, etc.

### *March 24, 1916*

I think I shall study sure enough this last term because it sure makes you feel bad when you take an exam and don't know whether you passed it or not. The old profs sure grade strict and they won't give you a thing.

There is a meeting of the Texas Cattlemen's Association in Houston and I never saw so many people on the streets of this little place.

Next Saturday, Companies A and B are going on a hike about five miles the other side of Harrisburg. We are going to stay over Sunday, going swimming, boat riding, etc.

### *March 31, 1916*

There sure have been lots of big fires here in Texas lately. There sure was a big one here last Sunday, burnt a whole lot of cotton, box cars, warehouses in the M.K. & T yards... Fifteen of the boys "busted" the second term down here., two good football men along with them. I don't know what we are going to do for a football team next year.

### *April 4, 1916*

Gee wiz, I've got a biology exam tomorrow and I don't know a thing about it. I never saw such a place for examinations.

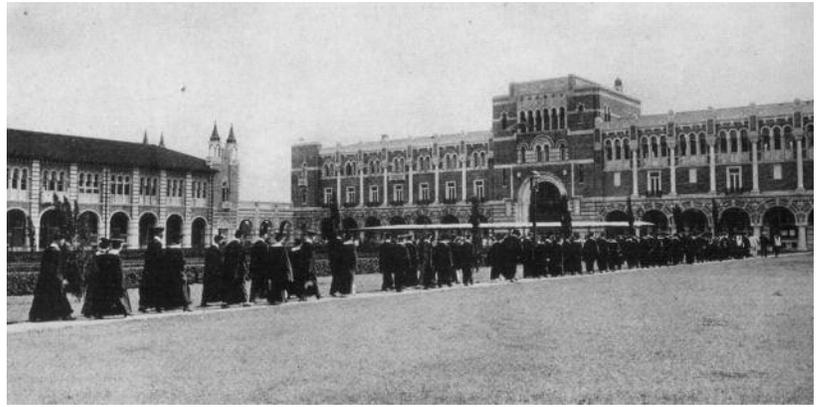
### *April 15, 1916*

You bet I want to come home... School is out on the 7th of June. Commencement exercises will be held and as it is the first class to graduate I believe they will have something worth seeing. ...and unless I simply can't stand it here any longer I would like to remain until the 9th.

*April 21, 1916*

Today, being San Jacinto Day we have a holiday. Also had one yesterday. One of the members of the Board of Trustees died so they gave us a day off.

We have a track meet with L.S.U. this evening...I know they will beat us because they have three Southern title holders and the best part of our team is on probation. Tomorrow afternoon we have a double-header with A&M. So far this season our baseball team hasn't won one game. It's not the team as much as it is the coach.



*Rice Commencement, 1917*

*May 6, 1916*

The Texas Intercollegiate Track meet was held on Rice Field and nine state records were broken.

*May 27, 1916*

I believe that I am getting the mumps...

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*Continued from page 1*

## Rice Before the Buildings



*View from Main Street north of Harris Bayou (Harris Gully) Bridge. Construction of the first Rice buildings can be seen in the background.*



*Mechanical Laboratory and Campanile under construction*



*Looking east to Main Entrance Gates on Main Street*

# Site of Rice Institute is Formally Announced

As Long Ago Stated in the *Houston Chronicle*—

## Great School Will Be on the Main Street Road— Preparations for Building Are Now Being Made.

Amid the pines that grow along the Main street road beyond the city limits, the spires and domes of the greatest institution of learning in the South are soon to rise. The site is definitely announced. The price is paid, the property is owned and ready for the school conceived so many years ago in the mind of a man now dead. His millions go to its endowment and the task imposed upon those men selected to administer the millions that he left has progressed to a concrete effect. The two hundred and eighty-six acres in a sweep of rolling Texas land has been acquired at a cost of \$180,000. The greatest architects in the world are now at work or have ready to submit the preliminary design to cover a comprehensive plan good for a hundred years. A million dollars will be spent at once in the initial equipment of a university that as yet has not a single student.

The president, back from one of the most remarkable tours around the world that ever yet has been set down to record, stands ready to incorporate in this institution the best there is or ever has been in the realm of education.

The millions left by William Marsh Rice to this magnificent attainment, coming so far after he has passed away, have been increased until no school but one in all the land may boast of such a rich inheritance. The plans of the trustees are so conceived that no school

in the western hemisphere devoted to such aims may claim more distinction in the wealth of opportunity.

The grounds...are located some three miles from the city's heart. ...The campus is triangular in form with its point toward Houston.

In the middle of the tract along the Main street road is one single 10-acre tract has bit been acquired. It is held by Charles Weber and he has not relinquished his claim, despite the tempting offers made.

On Saturday afternoon President Lovett, in the automobile of Mr. James A. Baker, inspected the site of the new school it has been left to him to establish among the institutions of the land.

Straight from the city over the well paved road beneath the live oaks and the pines the way is one of the most beautiful of all the roads leading from the city. On the extension of the principal thoroughfare and adjacent to the best part of Houston, the site was accepted as the best available.

The South End car is to be extended to the site of the school just as soon as actual construction work commences. Already part of the intervening property has been platted and lots in many tracts are on the market. The effect of the location of the school is already felt in the city.

—*Houston Chronicle*, May 9, 1909

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Alan Bath



## Memorial Proposal

Readers of previous “From the Archives” columns may remember that, unnoted by the *Thresher*, the statue of William Marsh Rice was unveiled in 1930. However, the idea of a memorial to him was proposed much earlier by a student, Max H. Jacobs, of the Class of '26, in a letter to the *Thresher*, “in order that the students and visitors to the Institute shall see expressed in a tangible form the atmosphere that the munificence of Mr. Rice has established.” (*Thresher*, 24 February 1924)

## Balloon-toss Fall-out

On September 15, 1966, the *Thresher* reported that “Last night a Baker freshman fell from a third-story roof during an exchange of water balloons.” He was taken to Methodist Hospital, x-rayed, and the following morning underwent surgery for a fractured elbow. He is reported to be “in fine condition.” (One hopes that the injury was not to his balloon-pitching arm).

## Showered With Honors

“The Harvard of the South soaked up another impressive achievement during the semester break when three Will Rice freshmen brought the world shower-taking crown to the Rice campus. Terry Gibson, Rich Ryan, and Charley King, who originated the idea, stayed under the nozzle for 61 hours, to surpass the old endurance record of 60 hours held by a student at the University of Illinois.” (*Thresher*, 2 February 1967)

## History Chair:

The *Thresher* reported on 21 September 1967, that “The Hobby Foundation, of which Oveta Culp Hobby is President, has given \$500,000 to Rice to establish the William Pettus Hobby Chair in American History.” The gift was made through the Rice University \$33 million campaign and is the eleventh permanently endowed Memorial Professorship secured by that fund drive. The first holder of the chair was

U. S. constitutional scholar, Dr. Harold Hyman. Professor John Boles, editor of the *Journal of Southern History*, is the current incumbent.

## Acid Comments

Timothy Leary: “Guru? Prophet? Pied Piper,” spoke to an overflow crowd at Rice Memorial Center on the history of metaphysical experience, getting high, and dropping out. According to the *Thresher*, “the overall effect (of his presentation) was that of a completely gentle person, thoroughly aware of his limitations and hang-ups.” Former governor of Texas Price Daniel, in remarks carried by the *Houston Chronicle*, criticized Leary’s appearance, saying he was “saddened and distressed” that Rice would encourage “this spectacle.” (*Thresher*, 22 February 1968)

## One more headline:

“Stewart Will Talk on Ant Communion” (*Thresher*, 20 March 1931)\*

\* In fairness to the writers of the *Thresher*—the talk dealt with social rather than religious ant activities.



Illustration for  
Junior Prom,  
Campanile, 1917  
by L. Y. White