

# The Cornerstone

FALL 2000

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. 6, NO. 1

## *THE FLYING OWLS... RICE INSTITUTE FROM THE AIR*

**T**he November 25, 1921, *Thresher* reported that "Tom Eaton and Elisha Embree, two Rice students, have joined forces in producing a work of art entitled 'The Flying Owls' containing a series

of photographs of the campus taken from an airplane...Eaton and Embree rented the airplane November 11, the day of the A & M game. Embree flew it and Eaton took the pictures. Considering the comparative inex-

perience of the students in this line of work, the results they achieved are surprising." The following is a complete reproduction of the text and the photographs.



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*This book is the product of two Owls, who have returned to the Rice Institute to resume their studies started before the war. It is our purpose to present the real beauties of Rice in a different way and our hope that in future years these views will serve to recall pleasant memories of your collegiate days. We desire to express our sincere appreciation to those of the faculty who have so kindly assisted us in this production. The Editors, E. D. Embree and Thos. B. Eaton*

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*To the memory of the Gold Star men of Rice Institute, many of whom were our good friends, and especially to our very good friend, Charles Hazen Patterson, who was attached to the 5th Marines and died of wounds received in the Meuse Argonne, we dedicate this book.*

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*Photo Essay begins on page 4*

# 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 which may be used in  
future issues of The Cornerstone. Items  
cannot be returned and will be donated to  
our archival collection.*

NEWSLETTER DESIGNED  
BY TOMORROW'S KEY

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# THE OLD FIELD HOUSE

The September 17, 1920, *Thresher* ran a picture of the front elevation of the new field house with the caption, "This is the Club House. Gaze at its graceful lines, at its sturdy brick and cement and rejoice!"

Unfortunately, its sturdy brick and cement were not all that durable since the field house is no longer there.

In looking through the photo files in the Woodson Research Center recently we came upon a folder with pictures of terrible structural damage in the field house along with a report from the Department of Engineering to George R. Brown. It is dated 18 January 1949 and begins:

"The undersigned examined the Rice Field House on the Monday after Christmas with a view toward determining whether settlement of the building was continuing following the repair work done during the spring or summer of 1948; also, how serious present settlement appears.

"Serious structural damage appears in both the original building and later additions. Photograph 1 shows incipient failure of the circular arch over the main entrance...Some three days prior to the taking of this photograph these cracks had been patched. They opened after the patching and continue up to the roof. Some ten years ago a two-story addition was put on the northeast side of the main building...This addition is sinking rapidly...and pulling away from the

original building."

The report continues to enumerate the various structural problems in the building, including, "The visitors' dressing rooms (which space is used daily as the lecture room for



[Old] Field House, The Rice Institute, December 1948. Structural damage to building showing wall damage and movement caused by building sinking and the pulling away of the two story addition on the northeast side of the main building.

photo taken by Elwood M. Payne, New York - Houston

all physical education classes and in addition as a dressing room by the women participating in women's athletics) is in a deplorably dangerous condition."

It goes on to say: "Attention is called again to the fact that all of the evidences of settlement have appeared since the repair work done earlier in 1948. We are of the opinion that patching up the cracks does not remove the fundamental causes of the movement and resulting structural damage nor lessen the dangers of partial collapse of parts of the building. Further movement of the office addition occupied by P. E. and Athletic Association could possibly break the gas pipes supplying the

gas-steam radiators in this section and cause a serious explosion and fire. We feel further that a collapse of the roof over the visitors' dressing room is highly probable and would be most damaging to the reputation of the Institute.

"During the strenuous intramural athletic contests held quite frequently the entire building vibrates. This vibration greatly increases the tendency of cracks to spread. It is highly probable that portions may collapse during such contests and seriously injure a large number of Rice students and personnel.

"It is our opinion that the entire two-story office wing and the single-story visitors' dressing room are so dangerous structurally that their use for human occupancy should be abandoned at once. We think the main building is not in quite as dangerous a condition, but that it is only a question of time until it (under the continuing settlement and tearing apart)

will have to be abandoned. While we have not made computations we feel that the building is not worth a complete overhaul and we are sure that surface repairs made from time to time will not make the building safe."

Signed by N. S. Willison, J. R. Sims, and L. B. Ryon

Stephen Fox's monograph, *The General Plan of the William M. Rice Institute and Its Architectural Development*, sheds some light on why this structure was ready to fall down by the late forties:

"The Rice Institute's first post-war building was a field house erected in

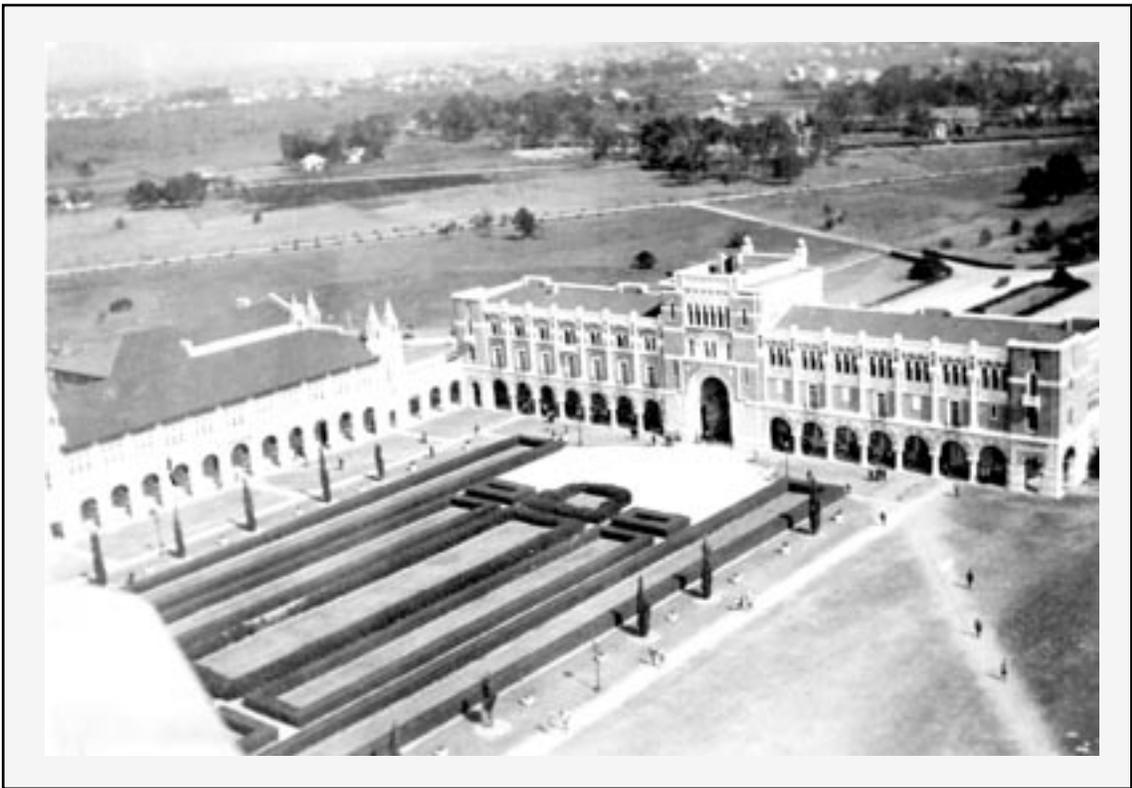
See **Field House**, page 12



*The principal entrance and main avenue of approach, which divides at the forecourt into two driveways circling the ends of the Administration Building and continuing at a distance of seven hundred feet apart for a half mile. In and around this rectangle the main buildings of the future Institute will be grouped.*



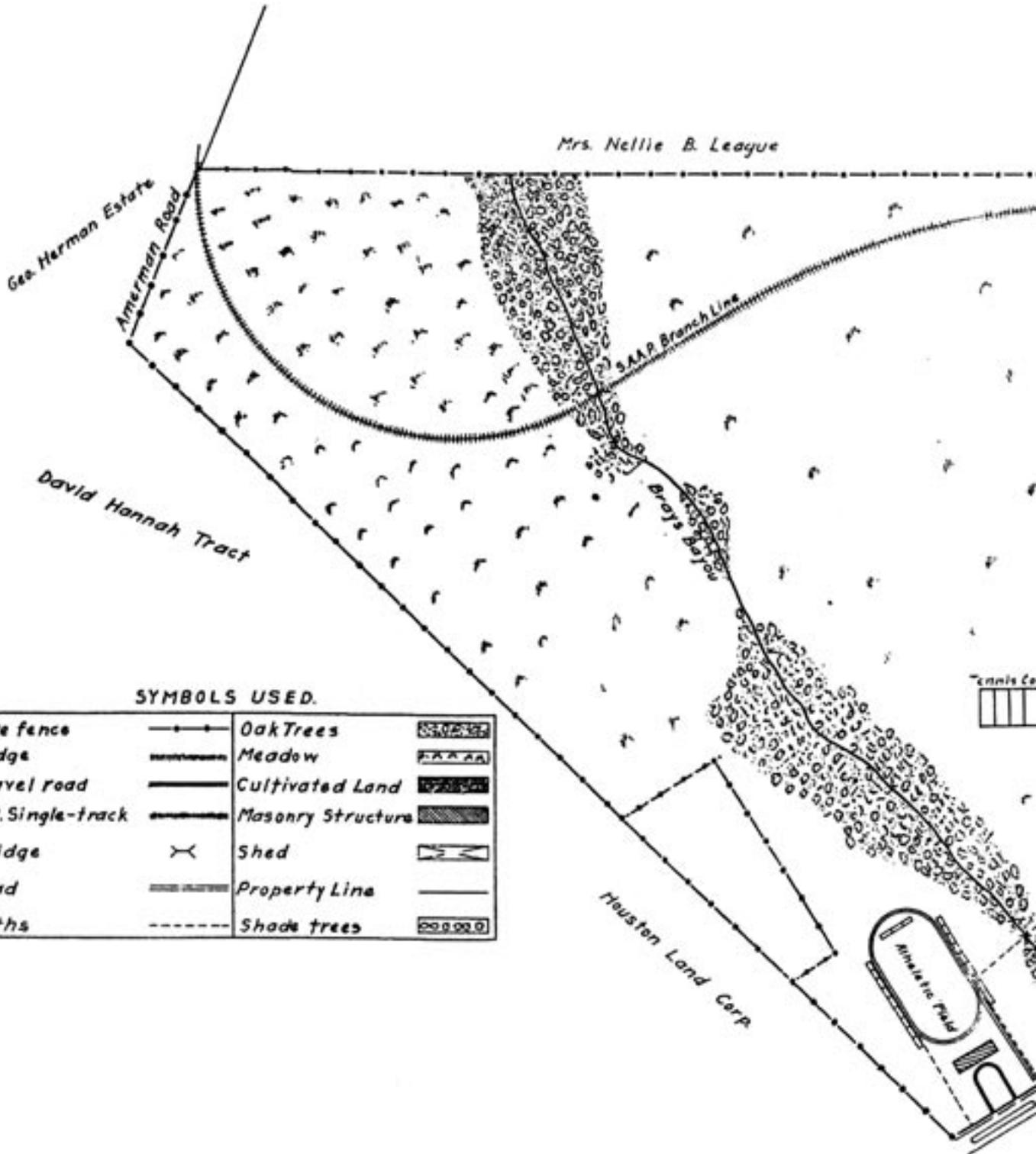
*The Administration Building, Physics Laboratories and Lecture Amphitheater inclosing Academic Court with Dormitory group in the background.*



*The Academic Court, Cloisters and Sally Port, "Nature's Own Parade Ground."*

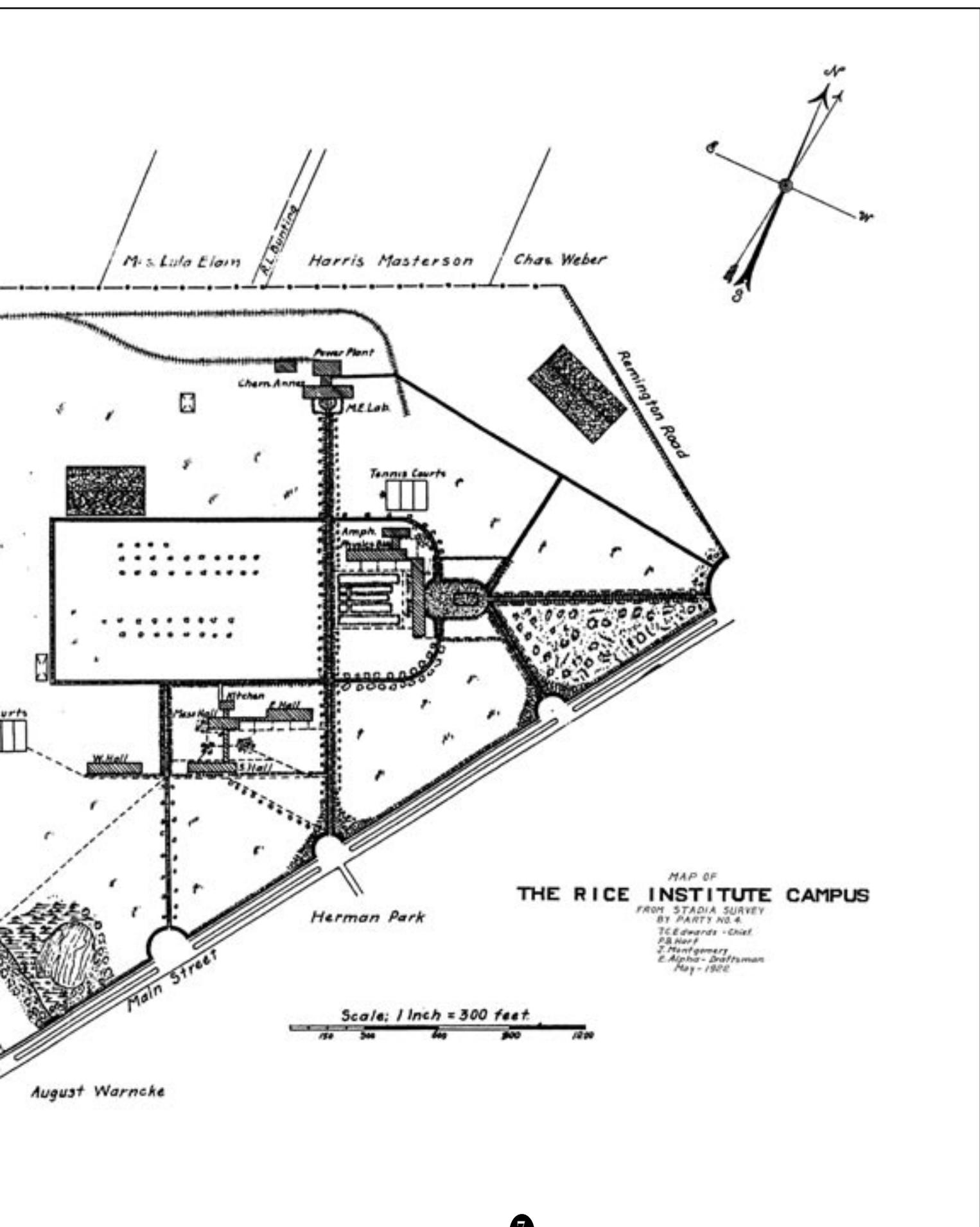


*Mechanical Laboratory, Machine Shop and Power House with the lofty campanile towering above.*



SYMBOLS USED.

Wire fence		Oak Trees	
Hedge		Meadow	
Gravel road		Cultivated Land	
R.R. Single-track		Masonry Structure	
Bridge		Shed	
Road		Property Line	
Paths		Shade trees	



MAP OF  
**THE RICE INSTITUTE CAMPUS**

FROM STADIA SURVEY  
 BY PARTY NO. 4.  
 T.C. Edwards - Chief  
 P.B. Hart  
 J. Montgomery  
 E. Alpha - Draftsman  
 May - 1922

Scale: 1 Inch = 300 feet.  
 150 300 450 600 750

August Warncke



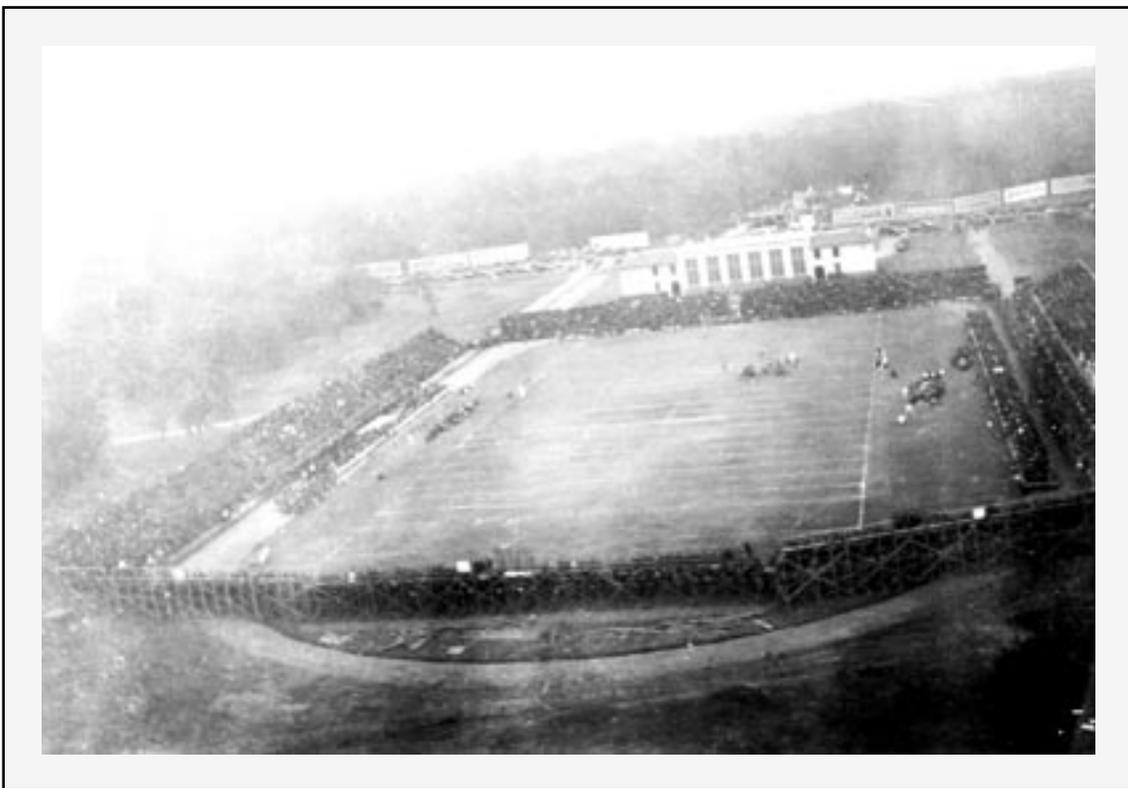
*Looking south over the campanile.*



*Residential Halls and Commons with Athletic Field and Tennis Courts in the background. [The dorm in the foreground is now Baker College; midground, Will Rice College; background, Hanszen College.]*



*Field House and Athletic Field [see related article] from Main street side. [The building in the foreground is Ye Old College Inn – see related article.]*



*Athletic Field during Rice – A. & M. game Armistice Day with ten thousand spectators filling the stands.*



*Looking over East Hall at Administrative group.*



*Residential Halls and Commons looking east and Autry House across Main Street.*



*The Autry House, the Owl and Main Street Boulevard. [Autry House was built by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to be a community center for Rice students. The Owl was a casual eatery serving hamburgers and snacks. The "Toonerville Trolley," a one-car shuttle connecting with the streetcar line at Eagle Street, is shown in the background.]*



*General view of buildings with Houston in the background.*

## ***YE OLDE COLLEGE INN OPENS 1918***

**Y**e Olde College Inn was opened in 1918 opposite the Rice playing fields. It was owned by George Martin, who had originally operated the Owl, a drive-in and soda fountain emporium across from the Institute's main gate. This small eatery contained two tables and had one employee (George). When Ye Olde College Inn opened, the restaurant was on the ground level and George lived upstairs. It became the hangout for Owl athletes. Tommy Thornhill, one of the early managers, initiated the Coaches Table in 1921 when Phil Arbuckle was head coach. Martin turned the restaurant over to Ernie Coker in 1946. In the fifties Coker added the Varsity Room, where most of the Owl sports banquets were held as well as dances and meetings.



*"Ye Olde College Inn just across from the Campus," 1921*

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## **Old Field House**

*continued from page 3*

the summer of 1920. Located south of Harris Gully and facing Main Boulevard, it was the first institute building to deviate from the general plan. This was done purposely, for it was intended as a temporary facility and therefore relegated to a portion of the institute site marked for interim development. The drawings were prepared by [William Ward] Watkin in Houston in May, 1920, the same month the board of trustees awarded the general construction contract to Tom Tellepsen of Houston for

\$53,759. The structure was completed by the fall of 1920.

"The field house comprised a two-story brick and stucco box (covered with a hipped tile roof) split in half by a double-height basketball court. Brick and plaster piers upholding a parapet divided the glazed expanse into regular bays. The frank display of steel-sash fenestration units was somewhat startling, but the temporary nature of the field house and its isolated location no doubt persuaded both architects and client against

## ***DR. ALBERTO I. ROCA & RESEARCH ON HISPANICS AT RICE***

**D**r. Alberto I. Roca, postdoctoral research scientist in the Biochemistry Department, is chairman of the history committee of HACER, a group dedicated to Hispanic students and staff at Rice. The committee has an ambitious program that includes a scholarly 30 – 50 page research paper on the history of Hispanics at Rice, to be written by a student selected with the assistance of Professor John Boles. HACER will make available articles to the *Thresher* and *Sallyport*, as well as disseminate information through its newsletter and website. The committee members plan to search for photographs and relevant published materials in the Houston media and work with the Office of Alumni Affairs and the alumni group SOLAR to collect information on the history of Hispanics at Rice.

The HACER meeting on October 19 is focusing on Hispanic students at Rice during the 1920s and 30s and featuring members of the families of Primitivo Nino '28, Anita Barrera '29, Diana Gonzalez '30, Olivia Gonzalez '34, and Yolanda Gonzalez Ortega '35.