

## Philanthropy in education — A historical essay: Part 2\*

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### Philanthropy and Higher Education for Women

The extension of college-level instruction to women was an American innovation and a creative achievement of American generosity. In the 1830s, collegiate co-education began at Oberlin in Ohio; in England, this started in 1872 at Cambridge, and only much later elsewhere in Europe. The Quaker insistence on equality of the sexes and the demand from women for equal sharing of hardships were contributing factors of this innovation. But this tendency was ridiculed by many Americans, including professional educators. It was philanthropy that changed this attitude.

**Mathew Vassan** (1792-1868) left England in 1796 and settled with his family in Poughkeepsie, New York. Dropping out of school at fourteen, he went into the brewery business and was highly successful. In 1861, he created the world's first endowed institution for the higher education of women.

The story of **Sophia Smith** (1796-1870) is one worth telling. Sophia was a timid deaf spinster from Hatfield, Massachusetts, who, in 1861, unexpectedly inherited a fortune from her brother. Not knowing what to do with this money, she turned to her pastor who, at first, refused to advise her fearing involvement in a lawsuit. On her insistence, he reluctantly agreed to see her through the process of bestowing her money to a worthy cause. Among the first suggestions he offered was a women's college, to which she agreed. When the pastor corresponded with the presidents of Harvard and Yale about the possibility of starting a women's college in connection with their institutions, the idea was dismissed as "foolish," "hazardous," and even

"wicked." It was only in 1870 that Smith College was founded to furnish education for women.

Another donor concerned with the education of women was **Henry F. Durant** (1822-1877). He was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, graduated from Harvard in 1842, and became a lawyer. He practiced with great success, but on the death of his only son abandoned his profession and devoted his energy to philanthropy. He founded Wellesley College for women in Wellesley, Massachusetts, which opened in 1875.

### Philanthropy and African Americans

Prior to the emancipation of the four million African Americans in the United States in 1865, there was opposition in the North and legislative enactments in the South forbidding the education of Blacks, enslaved or free. It was philanthropy from the northern Whites that opened college doors for them. A number of church organizations were soon formed to channel donations for education. The American Missionary Association was instrumental in the founding of a series of institutions that would come to dominate African American higher education.

Fisk School for Freedmen was founded in 1866 in Nashville, Tennessee, and was chartered a year later as Fisk University. It was one of the first institutions supported by the American Missionary Association. It took its name from its benefactor, General Clinton B. Fisk (1828-1890). The Fisk "Jubilee Singers" toured the North in 1871 and Europe in 1873, and were able to secure more donations to the university. Other philanthropists followed Fisk's example. In 1902, John D. Rockefeller established the General Education Board, which was a major event in the history of American philanthropy. Its immediate attention was focussed on the South.

Southern Whites became suspicious of northern philanthropy. A senator from Mis-

issippi commented that what the North was sending the South was not money but dynamite. "This education is ruining our Negroes. They're demanding equality."

### Libraries

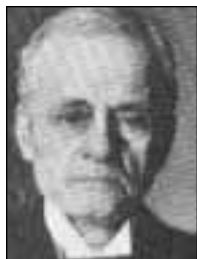
The passion for the buying and collecting of books has been a hobby of enlightened monarchs since ancient times. Probably the first ancient library built to house such collections was by Ptolemy I (died 283 BC) in Alexandria. This passion was expressed by Erasmus (1469-1536) in the following words, "When I get a little money, I buy books, and if any is left, I buy food and clothes." In modern times, great centres of learning are available, thanks to the generosity of those who collected books and then donated them as memorial libraries.

**Enoch Pratt** (1808-1896) was born in North Middleborough, Massachusetts, moved to Baltimore in 1831, and he became a wholesale iron merchant from which he gained enormous wealth. He was the first American millionaire to endow funds for the creation of libraries. He was later followed by Andrew Carnegie.

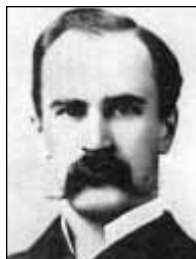
**William Osler** (1849-1919) was a distinguished Canadian who, in 1872, received his M.D. degree from McGill University in Montreal. He went abroad for postgraduate study and returned to Canada in 1874 to join the medical faculty at McGill. He then moved to the University of Pennsylvania, to Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and finally to Oxford University. His book, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, first published in 1892, went through numerous editions and was translated into many languages. Osler was an avid collector of rare books and manuscripts, which he donated to McGill University. The library in Montreal bears his name.

**Herbert Clark Hoover** (1874-1964) was born in West Branch, Iowa, orphaned at a young age, and lived with an uncle on a farm. In 1895, he graduated from the newly founded Leland Stanford, Jr. University in Palo Alto, California (now known as Stanford University), then was hired by a consulting firm in London to look after its large mining

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Enoch Pratt



William Osler



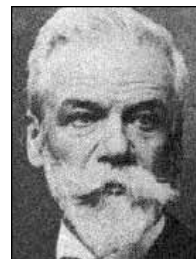
Herbert Clark Hoover



James Smithson



Benjamin Thompson



Ernest Solvay

interests in Western Australia. After displaying excellent abilities, he went to China to work in the mining industry from 1898 to 1901 where he and his wife survived the Boxer Rebellion. From 1901 to 1914, he resided in London and worked as a consulting mining engineer. During his stay in London, he and his wife Lou Henry Hoover (1874-1944), a geology graduate from Stanford, with the help of many researchers, translated Georgius Agricola's *De Re Metallica* from Latin into English.

In 1909, he published *Principles of Mining: Value, Organization and Administration*. The book was derived from a series of lectures he delivered at Stanford and at Columbia School of Mines. In 1912, he was elected to the Board of Trustees of Stanford University. In 1922, he published *American Individualism*. He became a wealthy businessman and was president of the United States from 1928 to 1933. He opposed the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan in 1945, opposed intervention in Korea, was against communism, and worked for social justice. He published his *Memoirs* in three volumes in 1951-1952. The Hoovers had a collection of about one thousand rare volumes on the history of sciences that was donated in 1970 to Harvey Mudd College. The collection is located in the Sprague Library in California.

**Donald F. Othmer** (1905-1995) was a prolific American inventor and a founding editor of the *Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology*. He worked for Eastman Kodak for four years before going to Brooklyn Polytechnic in 1932. In 1988, he and his wife Mildred Topp Othmer (1907-1998) gave a generous grant to the American Chemical Society to establish a library of chemical history. The library is now a part of the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Both also contributed generously to the University

of Nebraska, their *alma mater*. Donald was a 1924 graduate and his wife, a 1928 graduate in chemical engineering.

### Museums and Art Galleries

The love of beauty is a basic human trait that goes back to man's earliest days on earth. The ancient civilizations, whether Middle Eastern, Oriental, African, pre-Columbian American, Greek, or Roman, placed their finest productions in temples or palace treasuries. Even during the Dark Ages in Europe, the artistic tradition was kept alive, mainly in cathedrals, castles, and monasteries. The collector was the force that made the art museum possible. The first collectors were kings, princes, and rich European families such as the Medici family in Florence. With the rise of the middle class, rich merchants also became collectors. Toward the end of their lives or after their death, their collections were usually donated to their cities and kept as museums or art galleries.

**Sir Hans Sloane** (1660-1753), a British physician and naturalist, was president of the Royal College of Physicians from 1719 to 1735 and of the Royal Society from 1724 to 1740. His collections of botanical specimens, books, and manuscripts formed the beginning of the British Museum in London.

**James Smithson** (1765-1829), the son of a wealthy Englishman, graduated from Oxford University in 1782 and devoted his life to studying chemistry and mineralogy; the mineral smithsonite (zinc carbonate) is named after him. He never visited the United States, but stated in his will in 1826 that his estate was to be left to the United States to establish the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. for "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men." The Institution was founded in 1846 as a research centre and a museum.

**Sir Henry Tate** (1819-1899), founder of the Tate Gallery in London, was a sugar merchant who devoted all of his leisure time to the fine arts. He amassed a collection of paintings which he later gave to the City of London.

**Guggenheim Foundations** were established by a family of American industrialists and philanthropists who made their fortune from metal smelting and refining. Meyer Guggenheim (1828-1905) was born in Switzerland, and his sons, Daniel (1856-1930), Simon (1867-1941), and Solomon (1861-1949), were born in the United States. The Solomon Guggenheim Museum opened in 1939 in New York City to glorify abstract art. Other museums were later opened.

**Pavel Tretyakov** (1832-98), financier and entrepreneur, donated approximately 2000 works of Russian art from his private collection to the city of Moscow at the end of the nineteenth century. These works formed the basis from which today's impressive collection grew. Along with his paintings, Tretyakov also generously donated his house and surrounding buildings, which became the original premises of the gallery.

**Calouste Gulbenkian** (1869-1955), born in Istanbul, received an engineering degree from King's College in London. At age 22, he wrote a book on the management of petroleum resources, which came to the attention of the Turkish minister in charge of the oil fields of the Ottoman Empire. Gulbenkian engineered the creation of the Turkish Petroleum Company, and set up a consortium between the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Royal Dutch Shell, and Deutsche Bank. He became an extremely wealthy person. He resided in Lisbon and was an avid collector. He began collecting Greek and Roman coins in early boyhood and then expanded his activities in the early 1920s. Soon, no museum or private col-

lector could match his resources, determination, and connoisseurship.

Gulbenkian's executors funded the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon with an endowment of \$2.6 billion and an annual budget of \$102 million. Housed in a palace-like structure, and set in a 17-acre park filled with a permanent sculpture display and a children's art centre, the foundation holds about 6800 artefacts.

## Research

Another form of philanthropy was a donation to create a research institute for a specific area that was either considered neglected or considered to be of great potential at the time of donation.

**Benjamin Thompson** (Count Rumford; 1753-1814) left America because of his loyalist sympathies. He entered the service of the Elector of Bavaria in 1784 and became Minister of War and Police. It was there that he made his observation on hot metal chips from the boring of cannons, thus demonstrating that heat is a form of energy and not a "caloric" fluid. In 1799, he went to London, England, where he donated funds to create the Royal Institution—the first scientific research establishment in the British Empire. It was there that Humphry Davy and Michael Faraday made their great discoveries.

**Ernest Solvay** (1838-1922), a Belgian chemist, invented in 1861 a commercial process for preparing sodium carbonate, an essential ingredient in the manufacture of glass and the starting material for preparing other sodium salts. The process was applied worldwide and he made a great fortune. He gave liberally to education and charity, founded the École de Commerce and École des Sciences Politique et Sociale as well as international institutes of physics (1912) and

of chemistry (1913). He hosted international conferences that brought together the most famous physicists and chemists of his time and that were important in the development of modern science.

**Frederick G. Cottrell** (1877-1948) was born in Oakland, California, graduated from the University of California in 1896, and then went to Germany where he received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Leipzig in 1902. On his return he joined the US Bureau of Mines becoming its director in 1920. He invented electrostatic precipitation and with the proceeds, he created the Research Corporation, a funding organization devoted to the advancement of science.

## Scholarships

Donating funds to allow outstanding students to pursue their studies is another noble means of philanthropy. Henry Krumb (1875-1958) is quoted to have said, "I would not have been a mining engineer if I had not had a scholarship which paid my tuition fees." Krumb not only became a successful mining engineer but he also donated generously to his *alma mater*.

**Cecil Rhodes** (1853-1902), sailed from England to South Africa in 1870 at age 17 to join his older brother who was cotton farming in Natal. In the same year, diamonds were found in the Kimberley area. The two brothers joined in the diamond rush that was attracting tens of thousands of adventurers from all over the world. Rhodes quickly proved himself to be an astute businessman and was instrumental in amalgamating the major mining interests of Kimberley into one organization, De Beers, which he finally established in 1880 and which has monopolized the global diamond industry ever since.

During his nine years in Kimberley, Rhodes travelled back and forth to Oxford University in England, finally obtaining his degree in 1881. In 1890, he took office as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. Because of his political ambitions he was responsible for the Boer War between the British and the Dutch settlers. He died at age 48, just two months before the end of the war. Rhodes left the greater part of his vast fortune for the establishment of scholarships at his *alma mater*, Oxford University. Ninety-four Rhodes scholarships are now granted each year and as of 2002 more than 5300 scholarships have been awarded.

**Izaak Walton Killam** (1885-1955), born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, began his career at the age of 18 as a clerk in the Yarmouth branch of the Union Bank of Halifax. He was soon transferred to the bank's head office in Halifax, where his talent caught the attention of Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook) who, in 1904, persuaded Killam to join Royal Securities. By 1914, Killam had replaced Lord Beaverbrook as president of Royal Securities, and soon after acquired Beaverbrook's shares in the firm. The company became one of Canada's most influential investment houses and Killam established himself as one of the outstanding figures in Canadian financial history. Recognizing the great potential of Canada's forest and electric power industries, he organized many new companies and modernized others. The Killam Endowment was established by his widow in 1965 to support a number of scholarships, postdoctoral fellowships, and chairs for universities.

## Awards

An award is the judgment or decision of arbitrators or referees on a matter



Sir Henry Tate



Solomon Guggenheim Museum



Tretyakov Art Gallery



Calouste Gulbenkian

**Frederick G. Cottrell****Cecil Rhodes****Izaak Walton Killam****Alfred Nobel**

submitted to them. While rulers and governments give many awards to their military personnel and distinguished citizens, there are also a number of awards offered by private citizens. The most famous of these is that offered by **Alfred Nobel** (1833-1896), a Swedish chemist and inventor. In 1863, he patented a mixture of nitroglycerine and gunpowder, and in 1866, dynamite from which he made a great fortune. He bequeathed funds for annual awards in physics, chemistry, physiology and medicine, literature, and for the promotion of international peace. The Nobel Prize, which includes a gold medal and a large sum of money, has become the most prestigious prize awarded today.

## Epilogue

John Harvard was the first in North America to donate to education. He was soon followed by many others. Philanthropists in England were among the contributors to higher education in the American colonies, but this stopped after the revolution. On a casual look at the history of American and Canadian universities, it becomes apparent that fortunately there are a large number of good people with good intentions who donated generously for the cause of education. The philanthropic history of higher education in America was marked by the transition in the middle of the nineteenth century from small gifts to donations of tens and hundreds of millions of dollars. The expanding economy placed large fortunes in many hands<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Trusts grew rapidly in 1880-1905; there was extensive fraud, cruelty, and corruption in the American capitalist system. But, the system was capable of curing itself through public awareness and the democratic process. Series of laws were passed to curb trusts, notably those in 1890 and 1914.

In many cases the donors cite their personal experiences as young men in a society that provided no facilities for learning useful skills as the prime motive for their donation. Others were not satisfied with the actual classical system and wanted to make a change, and still others were not content with making their donations to colleges that already existed. They felt that only in their own institutions could their educational ideas be given complete and unopposed implementation.

Education was in the hands of the clergy at that time who resisted getting involved in "mechanical or agricultural operations." They were totally committed to theology, medicine, and law. But, when successful businessmen gave large donations to promote their profession, the clergy could not refuse and were forced to make the change. As a result, philanthropy played an important role in directing education in America toward engineering, business administration, women's education, and the education of African Americans. In its beginning, the higher education of women did not have the general acceptance that colleges for men enjoyed. The inclusion of women in the college and university community was an American innovation.

It can also be observed that some universities received large donations without changing their names to that of the donors, e.g., the University of Miami, Amherst University, and the University of Kansas. Asa Packer, the founder of Lehigh University, actually refused to have the institution adopt his name; Rockefeller also refused to let the University of Chicago take his name. On the other hand, some benefactors insisted to have their names given to the university or at least one of its colleges, e.g., McGill and Duke.

Some donors put certain conditions for the management of their donations

while others did not. Carnegie, for example, gave complete freedom to the men responsible for allocating his wealth and added that "they shall best conform to my wishes by using their own judgment." Rockefeller's General Education Board and Carnegie's Foundation reformed the higher education system in the United States. But, there were alarming critics that non-academic staff controlled education.

The true philanthropic spirit was expressed in the following quotations:

*"The greatest humbug in this world is the idea that the mere possession of money can make any man happy. I never got any satisfaction out of mine until I began to do good with it."*—Charles Pratt

*"The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced."*—Andrew Carnegie

## Suggested Readings

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