Franklin and Marshall College Historical Timeline

1777: Lancaster serves as the national capital on September 27, 1777, when the Continental Congress flees British General Howe's invasion of Philadelphia. The day after, Congress moves to a more secure location in York.

1780: A German department is established at the University of Pennsylvania to educate sons of prominent German Philadelphians.

1781 (October 19): The British army surrenders to American and French forces at Yorktown, Virginia.

1783 (September 3): Treaty of Paris is signed, ending the Revolutionary War in the colonies.

1786 (September 20): The University of Pennsylvania German Department grows to 60 students and holds its first commencement.

1786 (December 11): Four prominent ministers from the German Reformed and Lutheran Churches, in conjunction with numerous Philadelphians, petition the state legislature for the establishment of a German college in rural Lancaster. With the petition comes numerous pledges of financial support, headed by a generous gift of 200 pounds cash paper from "His Excellency, Benjn Franklin, Esq."

Document Listing Benjamin Franklin's donation to Franklin College.

1787 (March 10): Pennsylvania legislature grants charter and act of incorporation for "Franklin College", to be named in honor of Benjamin Franklin, "from a profound respect for the talents, virtues and services to mankind and to this county." Ten thousand acres of public lands in northern Pennsylvania are granted in financial support to the College. Trustees nominated in the charter include: four signers of the Declaration of Independence, three members of the Constitutional Convention, and seven officers of the Revolutionary War.

Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790.
1787 (March 19): Gotthilf Heinrich Ernst Muhlenberg is elected first Principal (President) of Franklin College. G. H. E. Muhlenberg serves as president until 1815, when the college is operated solely by the board of trustees.

G.H.E. Muhlenberg 1753-1815.

1787 (June 6): Franklin College dedication ceremony proceeds from the new courthouse in Penn Square to the new Church of the Holy Trinity. Four thousand copies of the dedication program are printed in both German and English. Thousands of people attend the ceremony, and a lengthy procession of carriages arrive from Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin, age 81, is actively engaged in Philadelphia as a member of the Constitutional Convention, and is unable to attend.

1787 Dedication program for Franklin College

1787 (July 16): Franklin College begins classes in the brew house on Mifflin Street, close to Trinity Lutheran Church. Within a year, Pennsylvania legislators grant the public storehouse and two lots of ground on North Queen Street to the trustees of Franklin College.

Brew House
1787 (October): Franklin College is divided into the German Department with advanced students, and the English Department with high school and college students. Approximately one-third of the first class of Franklin College consisted of female students. Among them was Richea Gratz (1774-1858), the first Jewish female student at Franklin College and likely one of the first female Jewish college students in the United States.

List of first students in the English school of Franklin College, 1787.

1788 (February 27): The college moves into its new quarters on North Queen Street.

Franklin College’s second home, a former storehouse on North Queen Street, was used by the College until 1839.

1789 (July): Franklin College almost closes due to immediate financial concerns. The annual tuition of four pounds proves too little to support the college’s operational costs, and many professors leave within a year. President Muhlenberg struggles forward, leading the college until his death in 1815.

Resignation letter of Frederick Valentine Melsheimer from the faculty of Franklin College citing his inability to continue under the present financial circumstances.

1789: General Edward Hand, Adjutant-General under Washington, is elected Chief Burgess of the city. He proposes that Lancaster would be a fitting location for the new capital of the nation, because it has a population of 4,200 persons and is the largest inland city in the United States.
1790: The federal constitution is ratified. Benjamin Franklin is dead at the age of eighty-four. George Washington is president of the United States, and the new nation is struggling with the debts of war. Many of the original Philadelphia sponsors have lost interest in the new college. The Lutheran and Reformed churches are also without money, and financial support for the college nearly disappears. Only the continued faith of the local trustees and President Muhlenberg keep the college alive.

1794: The Philadelphia to Lancaster turnpike is completed. A stagecoach leaving the White Swan at 5 a.m. will arrive in Philadelphia the same day.

1799: Lancaster becomes the state capital from 1799 until 1812, when Harrisburg is named the permanent capital.

The (old) Lancaster County Courthouse, built in 1784 in the center modern-day Penn Square, served as the Pennsylvania State Capitol while the legislature met in Lancaster. It was razed in the early 1850s upon the construction of the new courthouse at King and Duke Streets.

1800: Franklin College struggles along as a small institution under the leadership of President Muhlenberg, with the tiny faculty supplementing their income with private tutoring and church work.

1801: On New Year’s day, the city of Lancaster holds a grand celebration at Franklin College to celebrate the election of Thomas Jefferson.

1807: Franklin College trustees finally pay for the surveying expense of the College lands in northern Pennsylvania.

1807: Franklin Academy opens in the building of Franklin College under the direction of Thomas Poole, professor of languages. Numerous "private academies" are run out of the Franklin College building over the next three decades.

1809: Benedict J. Schipper opens a "private academy" for the instruction of Greek and Latin in the Franklin College building. Dr. Schipper would later collaborate with President Muhlenberg to publish the first bilingual German-American dictionary printed in America.

1818: The establishment of a joint theological seminary at Franklin College is proposed by the Lutheran and Reformed churches. After considerable debate, the plan is dismissed.
1825: Demand for educated ministers in the Reformed Church leads to the establishment of a theological seminary in Carlisle under the direction of the Rev. Lewis Mayer.

1826: With the closing of Professor Schipper's academy, the citizens of Lancaster petition the state of Pennsylvania for assistance in establishing a local academy.

1827 (April 14): Lancaster succeeds in attracting funding for a new academy, and an act of incorporation is passed by the state legislature with an appropriation of $3,000 for professors and a new building.

1827 (October): A new academy building is raised on the northeast corner of Orange and Lime Streets. James P. Wilson is selected the academy's first principal.

1828: Lands in northern Pennsylvania become profitable for the first time. Original grant of 10,000 acres sold off in pieces over the next twenty years.

1829: Rev. Mayer moves the Reformed Seminary to York and appeals to the Reformed Synod for the establishment of a classical institution to assist with preparatory training.

1832: Classical institution is established in York under the direction of Dr. Frederick Augustus Rauch. It is renamed the High School in 1835.

1835: The Debating Society at York theological seminary is renamed Diagnothian at the suggestion of seminary student Samuel Reed Fisher. In June of that year, Diagnothian is divided into two friendly rivals to encourage debate. Diagnothian retains its original name, while the new society is named Goethean, in honor of German philosopher and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

1835 (October): The school struggles financially and proposals are submitted to the Reformed Church to move the seminary to either Chambersburg, Lancaster, or Mercersburg. The residents of Mercersburg pledge $10,000 in support of the move, and it is hoped that once relocated, a collegiate charter can be secured for the High School from the Pennsylvania state legislature.

1835 (November): The High School at York moves to Mercersburg in 1835 with 21 students and two professors. Seven are Diagnothians and 11 are Goetheans.


1836: Dr. Frederick Augustus Rauch is elected the first president of Marshall College. Dr. Rauch serves until his untimely death in 1841 at age 34.

1837: Seminary building constructed in Mercersburg. Majority of building is leased to Marshall College upon completion.

Marshall College Buildings ca. 1845

1837: Mr. J. H. Augustus Bomberger is the first graduate of Marshall College.

1839: The Rev. Mayer withdraws from his professorship at the Theological Seminary. Dr. Rauch agrees to conduct both the college and seminary until the arrival of the Rev. John Williamson Nevin in 1840.
1839: Franklin College sells its former building on North Queen Street and purchases the Lancaster County Academy on Orange and Lime Streets.

*This building served as the home of Franklin College until 1856 when the College moved to its current location.*

1840: First student literary publication, Rup-Jim-Jon, is published at Marshall College.

1840: Dr. Rauch publishes *Psychology - a View of the Human Soul*. It is the first book in America to use the term "psychology" in its title, and is influential in spreading Hegelian philosophy throughout the United States.

1840: Graduates of Marshall College organize themselves, establishing one of the first alumni associations in the country.


*John Williamson Nevin, 1803-1886 later served as the second president of Franklin and Marshall from 1866-1876.*

1841: English department is added to Franklin College. The principal is Gad Day, former superintendent of Lancaster public schools.

1843: Marshall College Board of Trustees, at the suggestion of President Nevin, propose that the literary societies should erect halls on the Marshall College campus for their exclusive use.

*Goethean Hall at Marshall College built in 1846.*
1844 (August 12): Dr. Phillip Schaff arrives from Germany and joins the faculty of the Theological Seminar. Together with the Rev. John Nevin, the two professors define a new form of thinking and teaching known as "Mercersburg Theology".

1846: Franklin College board of trustees and the School District of Lancaster reach agreement whereby the school board would pay the salary of the Professor of Mathematics of Franklin College in exchange for the tuition of several advanced pupils. The arrangement is terminated by the school board in Sept. 1849, due to the construction of a new public high school.

1849 (December 6): In an effort to consolidate financial resources and secure the future of both colleges, the trustees of Franklin College extend a plan of union to President John W. Nevin and the trustees of Marshall College.

1850 (April 19): An act to consolidate Marshall College with Franklin College in Lancaster is passed by the state legislature on April 19, 1850.

1851: Opposition to the new Fugitive Slave Act is evident. Local white citizens defy a U. S. Marshall and slave owners trying to capture runaway slaves in Christiana, Lancaster county. The incident leads to the death of slave owner Edward Gorsuch and comes to be called the Christiana Resistance. Thaddeus Stevens succeeds in defending the 37 men charged with treason for defying the federal order.

1852: Fulton Hall (Fulton Opera House) is built on North Prince Street.

*Fulton Hall was used by the College for commencements, meetings, and theatrical productions until Hensel Hall was constructed on campus in 1925.*
1853 (March 1): The Hon. James Buchanan presides over the first meeting of the Franklin and Marshall College Board of Trustees.

*Buchanan served as the President of the Board of Trustees from 1852 until 1866.*

1853 (June 7): The formal opening of the College is held at "Fulton Hall". Classes are held in the old Franklin College building on North Lime Street until the dedication of the Main Building (Old Main) in May, 1856.

1853 (June 15th): Marshall College's real estate is officially transferred to Franklin and Marshall College.

1853: The Franklin and Marshall College men wore caps with bright letters on the front reading F M C. The local boys jokingly say it stands for "fools must come".

1853: Following the merger of Franklin College and Marshall College and the creation of F&M, members of the original Marshall College Alumni Association enthusiastically pledged themselves to the new institution. New officers of a combined association adopted the following statement of loyalty: "Resolved, that the Alumni Association of Marshall College expresses in public their entire and hearty concurrence on the consolidation that has taken place between their College and Franklin College."

1854: The Rev. E. V. Gerhart is elected first president of Franklin and Marshall College after the Rev. John W. Nevin and Dr. Phillip Schaff decline the post. Rev. Gerhart is a graduate of Marshall College, class of 1838.

1854: First F&M fraternity chapters are established, Chi Phi and Phi Kappa Sigma.
1855 (July 24): The first alumni dinner is held at Michael's Hotel on North Queen Street.

1856 (May 16): Main building (Old Main) dedicated as "Recitation Hall."

1856 (July 20): Cornerstones are laid for Goethean and Diagnothian Halls. Both buildings are dedicated in 1857.

Ca. 1860 view of the first four buildings on the F&M Campus: Janitor’s House, Goethean Hall, the College Building, and Diagnothian Hall.

1861: With the start of the Civil War, Goethean and Diagnothian Halls serve as hospitals for sick soldiers from Camp Johnston, an emergency recruitment camp located northwest of Lancaster city.

1863 (June 27): School officials close the Franklin and Marshall school year early in fear of the approaching Confederate armies. Many students leave to help burn the bridge at Wrightsville, preventing a Confederate advance across the Susquehanna into Lancaster county.

1863 (July): Battle of Gettysburg. To assist with hospital efforts, President Gerhart organizes a humanitarian trip with 15 to 20 students to the site of the battle. For three days they minister to the wounded in town and camp hospitals.

1866: Dr. John Williamson Nevin is elected 2nd president of Franklin College. He serves until his retirement in 1876.

1866: First baseball game is held by the student-run Alpha Club.
1871: Harbaugh Hall is constructed as the first dormitory on campus. It houses 40 students and includes dining facilities for 100. It stands for 29 years, until its demolition in 1900.

1871: The Mercersburg Theological Seminary moves to Lancaster and occupies two rooms in Old Main. Two additional buildings are constructed on campus to house Seminary professors.

1872: An Academy building is constructed to house the college’s preparatory school. The building is later known as "East Hall". Cyrus V. Mays, class of 1856, is placed in charge of the new school.

The Academy building served the F&M Academy and the College until its demolition in 1978.

1873: First student newspaper, College Days is published. Later student newspapers include The College Student (1881-1914), The F&M Weekly (1891-1915), The Student Weekly (1915-1964) and The College Reporter (1964-present).


1874: A rear addition to Old Main is constructed. It enlarges the chapel for services and commencement.


1883: The first issue of the Oriflamme yearbook is published.
1886: Scholl Observatory is built under the leadership of astronomy professor Jefferson E. Kershner. It is financed by Margaret Scholl Hood of Frederick, Maryland, in honor of her father, Daniel Scholl.

1887: Centennial Celebration of the founding of Franklin College. There are over 100 students currently enrolled in Franklin and Marshall College.

1887: The first football team is organized by Seminary student Miles O. Noll. Franklin and Marshall College is defeated 9-0 by the York YMCA.

1889: Franklin and Marshall Glee Club is formed under the direction of Seminary student William M. Irvine.

1891: The gymnasium (Distler House) is constructed, containing a bowling alley, indoor running track, and gymnastic equipment.

_The Gym was converted in 1925 for use as a student center when it became known as the Campus House. It was renamed Distler House in 1976._

1894: A voluntary college cadet corps is formed under the direction of Lieut. Edgar W. Howe, 17th Infantry. The company, complete with uniforms and weapons, studies military science and tactics.

1895: The "New Athletic Field" is constructed with the assistance of $1,500 from Henry S. Williamson. A concrete grandstand is added in 1922 at a cost of $10,000.

1897: Watts De Peyster Library constructed with funds donated by John Watts de Peyster of New York.

_Watts de Peyster was razed in 1936 to make room for the construction of Fackenthal Library._
1899: Franklin & Marshall Dramatic Association is formed under the direction of professor Claude B. Davis. The following year, the association is renamed the Green Room Club by college secretary and stage manager R. J. Pilgram.

An early Green Room cast.

1900: First basketball game is held against Millersville Normal School.

1902: Science Building dedicated. The new building houses the chemistry, biology, physics, and geology laboratories. It also includes new lecture halls, the college museum, and the president's office.

Science Building Lecture Hall ca. 1902.

1903: Jubilee Celebration of the chartering of Franklin and Marshall College. At the request of the Alumni Association, Professor Joseph Henry Dubbs publishes the first history of Franklin and Marshall College.
1908: A new Academy Building is constructed on campus with substantial help from Andrew Carnegie.

1910: Dr. Henry H. Apple is inaugurated as the 5th president of Franklin and Marshall College. The main address is given by Woodrow Wilson, President of Princeton University. President Apple is a graduate of the Franklin and Marshall class of 1889 and son of former president Thomas Gilmore Apple. He serves as president until 1935.

1915: Franklin & Marshall football team finally defeats Penn, 10-0.

Bonfires were a traditional conclusion to early football games. This bonfire dates from 1917.

1916: Inspired by World War I, students form a military drill program at Franklin and Marshall. More than 200 students are enlisted by the end of the year, including half the senior class.

1917: As a result of wartime rationing, Old Main closes to save coal. Professors hold classes in the Science Building and Library.
1918: U.S. Army Instrument Repair Branch, also known as the Bowman Technical School, is established on campus. The old Franklin and Marshall Academy Building (East Hall) serves as barracks.

1918 (September): The majority of Franklin and Marshall students are inducted into the Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.), under the direction of West Point graduate Lt. George L. Dernier. Following the November 11th Armistice, the S.A.T.C. is demobilized and the college resumes normal activities in the spring.

Student physical training during WWI.

1919: The department of Education is established.

1920: Enrollment begins to rise from around 300 students in 1920, to over 750 students by the year 1930.

1921: The department of Economics and Business Administration is established.

1924: The architectural firm of Klauder and Day presents master campus plan in the Colonial Revival style. Dietz-Santee dormitory, Meyran-Franklin dormitory, Biesecker Gymnasium, and Hensel Hall are all completed within three years. Two additional dormitories are planned, but never constructed.

Renderer of Biesecker Gymnasium, ca. 1925 (top) and Interior view of Hensel Hall shortly after completion, 1927.

1924: First wrestling match is held.
1928: St. Stephens Reformed congregation, worshipping in the College Chapel since 1865, dissolved due to declining membership. While weekday chapel attendance is still required, the College abolishes mandatory attendance at Sunday services recognizing that fewer Reformed-Church affiliated students are enrolled at F&M.

1935: Dr. John Ahlum Schaeffer is elected 6th president of Franklin and Marshall College. Dr. Schaeffer is a graduate of Franklin and Marshall College, class of 1904. He is the first president to hold a PhD, and the first not to be a minister. He serves until his sudden death in the spring of 1941.

1936: John Peifer, Jr. takes over the college’s small band after graduating from Franklin and Marshall College. The band progresses from 28 original marchers in 1936, to over 90 marchers in the 1950’s.

1937: The sesquicentennial celebration of Franklin College is held in mid-October. Current student enrollment is 800. A commemorative plaque celebrating the sesquicentennial of Franklin College and the signing of the United States Constitution is presented to the college by the Lancaster County Historical Society.

1937: Keiper Liberal Arts building dedicated. Watts de Peyster Library razed.

1937: 17 Alumni Association chapters exist across the country, including in New York City, Baltimore, Washington DC, and as far west as Cleveland and Chicago.
1938: Fackenthal Library dedicated on former site of Watts de Peyster Library.

1939: Aviation program started in Keiper Liberal Arts building. Eventually, it became a government sponsored flight school with 40 faculty members.

1940: The third floor of Keiper Liberal Arts is used as an airplane training area for the flight school. Two planes are moved into the building in pieces, then reassembled on the top floor.

1941: Upon the sudden death of President Schaeffer, History professor Dr. H. M. J. Klein serves as temporary president.

1941: In the fall, Theodore A. Distler is elected 7th president of Franklin and Marshall College. He arrives on campus one week before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

1942: Women attend regular summer school courses.


1943: The war training school is judged by the Navy to be the best of 90 such college programs in the country. The Navy V-12, and V-5 programs train pilots, deck, and engineering officers. Campus House (Distler House) is converted into a dining hall. It is the first on-campus dining facility since the demolition of Harbaugh Hall in 1900.

1945: Enrollment is less than 500 students. In July, the faculty numbers 28.

1945: President Distler surveys other American liberal arts colleges, and considers the question of co-education at Franklin and Marshall College.

1946: With the end of the war, enrollment grows to over 1200. There is a critical shortage of faculty. Spring term brings four coeds to campus enrolled as pre-med students.
1950 (Fall): F&M football team celebrates and undefeated season.

1952: At the request of the Alumni Association, Professor emeritus H.M.J. Klein publishes the second history of Franklin and Marshall College, 1787-1948. The history emphasizes Franklin and Marshall College from 1900 to the end of World War II.

1954: President Distler resigns to become president of the Association of American Colleges.

1955: William Webster Hall is elected 8th president of Franklin and Marshall College. Within two years, he is forced to resign due to medical reasons.

1955: Goethean and Diagnothian Literary Societies merge due to declining student interest.

1957: Dr. Frederick DeWolf Bolman Jr. is inaugurated 10th president of Franklin and Marshall College. He serves until 1962.


1960s: Glory days of the Franklin and Marshall Protest Tree outside Distler Hall. On the tree, students protested everything from segregation, to the Vietnam War, to the college food service’s abysmal Thanksgiving dinners.

*Students examine the postings on the protest tree.*
1961 (April): Students riot in front of the President's house and Hensel Hall, burning effigies and college property in protest of administration policies.

1962: President Bolman forced to resign in a dispute with the Board of Trustees. Anthony R. Appel named to the presidency but resigns within a week due to faculty outrage over the Board's method of replacing Bolman. Dean G. Wayne Glick named acting or interim President.

1963: Mandatory chapel attendance is abolished.

1963: Keith Spalding is elected 11th president of Franklin and Marshall College. He serves until his retirement in 1983.

1963 (December 12): Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visits campus as part of the Topics Lecture Series. He addresses a capacity crowd of 3,300 at the Mayser Center.

1964: College begins the Pre-College Enrichment program (PREP), providing eight weeks of preparation-for-college instruction to economically and educationally disadvantaged African-American high-school graduates.

1964: Ben Franklin Residence Halls constructed.

1965: "Mezey affair." Visiting English instructor Robert Mezey suspended after being accused of urging students to burn their draft cards. He was later reinstated.

1967: Grundy Observatory constructed.

1968: Thomas Residence Hall constructed.

1968: Construction of Whitely Psychological Labs.

1969: Franklin-Meyran Residence Hall converted to office space.

1969: Herman Arts Center opens.

1969 (May 22): "May 22nd incident." Black students block the final examination in the history course "The Black Experience in America," demanding an apology from the faculty for exploitation and an "A" in the course.

1969: College ends its formal affiliation with the United Church of Christ, and becomes a secular school.

1969: Continuing a trend in single-sex schools across the country, the Board of Trustees decide to admit women to Franklin and Marshall College in the fall of 1969, officially making the school co-educational. Franklin and Marshall men heartily support the decision.

1970: "Lazroe-Mayer incident." Students protest the administration's failure to rehire popular sociology instructor Anthony Lazroe and history instructor Henry Mayer. The protest culminates in the East Hall sit-in on April 30, where students took over the building for several hours.

1974: Black Student Union and Black Cultural Center founded.


1976: Steinman College Center constructed.

1977: East Hall razed.
1979 (March): Three Mile Island nuclear accident forces the College to close for a short time.

1982: The Alumni Association receives a major gift from an alumnus to establish a separate endowment and operating budget. Thanks to additional contributions combined with prudent management, the Association's endowment now totals more than $1 million.


1985: Stahr Hall renovations completed. Building renamed Stager Hall.

1987: College celebrates bicentennial of Franklin College. Celebrations include Benjamin Franklin sculpture, Bicentennial Tapestry, John Marshall window, and publication of *Hullabaloo Nevonia*.

*Benjamin Franklin impersonator Sam Kressen at Bicentennial celebration.*

1987/88: The College formally "derecognizes" F&M fraternities.

1991: Martin Library of the Sciences opens, housing the college's science collection and computing center.

1995: Alumni Sports and Fitness Center opens on site of former ice rink.

Alumni Sports and Fitness Center under construction ca. 1993.


2002: John Anderson Fry is elected 14th president of Franklin and Marshall College.

2003: College celebrates sesquicentennial of the union between Franklin College and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.

2004: College ends "derecognition" policy of College fraternities after 16 years. Buchanan Park renovated.

2006: The Alumni Association boasts chapters around the country and hosts activities around the world. It serves the nearly 25,000 living alumni who hold leadership positions in virtually every profession, and who enjoy the ongoing programs of the college.

2007: New all-weather synthetic turf athletic field constructed on North campus.

2008 October: New Klehr Center for Jewish Life and Ken Gramas '88 Memorial Pavilion at North Campus Athletic Turf Field dedicated.

2010: John Anderson Fry leaves Franklin and Marshall to become President of Drexel University. John Burness (F&M 1967) serves as interim president. Daniel Porterfield of Georgetown University chosen as 15th President of Franklin and Marshall College.

2011 April: Daniel R. Porterfield is inaugurated as 15th President of Franklin and Marshall College.

2011: New College House opens. It is the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified building on campus, highlighting the College's commitment to sustainability.