

RENAISSANCE



Renaissance





W. Merguerian

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The Legend of Old Ben Butler

Today, the cannon on the quad sits in solitary. It is rarely appreciated by passers-by, and unequivocally ignored by many students during their entire four years here. But an aura of dignity seems to surround it at the same time. For, it is a cannon, and it cannot be denied that an old cannon holds within its iron walls secrets of the past — mysterious and romantic stories of Civil Wars, dying men and patriotism — tales that seem ready to burst from its silent mouth, as cannon balls undoubtedly did in the old days.

The URI cannon, nicknamed 'Old Ben Butler,' may symbolize past battles in the War Between the States, yet, it is known and has been recorded as fact to have participated in an even more symbolic battle — the battle for the University of Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Agricultural School was officially opened in 1889, with a grand total of one classroom building, the Taft Laboratory, along with a faculty of five.

Previously, Brown University had been carrying on a rather small and meager program of agriculture and mechanic arts. But it was situated in urban Providence and the program lagged.

A few years later, however, the battle began. In 1892, the Second Morrill Act was passed, creating more funds for a state university. A year-long controversy was begun over who would receive the funds — Brown University, or the Rhode Island State Agricultural College.

Miraculously, the public's attitudes completely supported R.I.S.A.C. In hearings, meetings, and newspapers, the idea of a 'people's college' rather than a college for the aristocracy was stressed, and became the basic source of long-standing opposition to Brown's continued use of funds from the Morrill Act. More and more, people were behind the growth of the small agricultural school, particularly the residents of South County. Finally, their stubbornness prevailed, and funds were transferred, and the name of the school was changed to the Rhode Island College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.

The college was born. A symbolic gesture by the students, exuberant over winning the first big battle, and knowing it would be all uphill from there, marked its birth. A torchlight procession from the center of Kingston to the center of the school, the quad, was formed, and ended with speeches and bell-ringing. A flag was run up, and the occasion was saluted when the excited students shot off 25 rounds from the cannon. On the last round, however, too much gunpowder burst a huge hole in the side of it. To the relief of the nearby residents, the explosion quieted the students, and they all went home to bed.

So there stands Old Ben Butler, forgotten veteran of a prestigious battle. He doesn't go completely unnoticed, though. It is known that lovers have left notes to each other in his gaping wound. Yet the damage in its side seems like it's been there for ages, and the cannon itself seems as if it has been growing out of the ground for as long as the grass surrounding it. Nevertheless, the dignity is there, and if someone would just stop, look and appreciate it, they'd sense that feeling of history still very much alive within the stone gates of URI.

— Evelyn Short



College Store 1910



RISC Co-op Store 1931



A. Ostrowsky



A. Ostrowsky

Preface

Within the leaves of this yearbook, we earnestly hope you will discover that which we have discovered accidentally ourselves while putting it together. There is an atmosphere of change between the covers; a subtle theme of diversion and variety, that has somehow been created more or less by chance. For, in the beginning, it was felt that there was no need for a theme — it seems every theme or gimmick had been touched upon previously, and there would be no need for such foolishness this year.

Fortunately, we were wrong. A yearbook creates its own theme, a universal one that cannot be ignored no matter how it may be disguised in some other 'way-out' idea. That theme is change, and, to us, there could be no other.

It just makes sense that any yearbook, all yearbooks, reflect the emotions and events of passing time, and, more important, how they grow, develop, stagnate, die, or live on. That is change, and it can happen so subtly that even those who write about it and photograph it do not capture its essence at first.

Only this completed book portrays it, we believe, in its rare, untouched form. We have tried not to tamper with it or overdo it — and we hope it is less blatant than in yearbooks that have come before. But, it is there to find, to read about, to appreciate — and, we hope, to enjoy.

— Ev Short
Literary Editor



L. Tony



Campus 1901



Chicken Plucking Class 1903