Tradition at Montclair State Teachers College

When the topic of “Tradition” was assigned to us, we were very much surprised that we should be asked to write on such a seemingly insignificant subject. As freshmen, we did not fully realize the important role that tradition has played, and probably will play, in the life of a college student.

There we were poor, floundering freshmen, without any idea as to how to go about procuring such information. We finally decided to turn to several members of the faculty and student body and ask them to help us in our plight.

The first thing we discovered was their traditional friendliness and their willingness to come to our aid. It is this same friendliness which the freshmen gratefully receive, and knowing the value of it, pass it onto future Montclair students.

The freshman first comes in contact with the traditional hazing. One week is set aside, during which upper classmen are in their glory making the newcomers feel green and insignificant. During this period, freshmen are not allowed to enter the Administration Building through the main door, or permitted to walk on the grass. They are ordered to address upper classmen as Mr. and Miss. At noon, each day, the freshmen gather at the sun dial or “Rat’s Court,” as it is called, and are put through a series of ridiculous antics Each one is required to wear a huge placard with his name and to dress in any other outlandish fashion which the upper classmen desire. The “dorm” students’ are privileged with an extra allotment of hazing which usually runs into the wee hours of the morning.

The students living in the dormitories are familiar with the famous tradition of Agora--that of serenading the girls of Russ Hall on Tuesday nights after their meetings. The songs are also traditional, having been sung years ago at Montclair. This custom is one which is looked
forward to by all “dorm” girls and long after they have graduated the songs of Agora remain in their memories.

Another of the well-known traditions of Montclair is the fact that all freshman and sophomore girls live at Edward Russ Hall, while all the boys and the Junior and Senior girls reside at Chapin Hall.

Because of late leave (10:30) on Wednesday nights, it is customary for the “dorm” girls to leave their beloved studies to go to Upper or Lower to the movies.

It has become traditional in the spring for Montclair student’s to go off in pairs, one of each sex, and head for the traditional wooing grounds-- the amphitheater.

The Dean’s List is quite a different tradition at M.S.T.C. than in other colleges. While in most colleges the chief ambition of the students is to get on the Dean’s List, which is one of honor, at Montclair it is an ambition to stay off.

All sports lovers at M.S.T.C. know that Trenton State Teachers College is our traditional rival in all forms of athletics.

As in other colleges, Montclair does not have the usual “cuts” allowed. Any “cutting” done at “Montclair is at the students’ own expense

The dislike of college students to have Montclair referred to as Montclair Normal School has been passed on since M.S.N.S. became M.S.T.C.
For a number of years, it has been the custom for Professor Roy W. Hatch to present a Lincoln’s Birthday assembly at which time many former students return to visit their old Alma Mater.

A week before graduation an Alumni Day is set aside. Alumni return to visit classes and professors. They attend a luncheon, card party, and dance. This year the dance and card party will be dispensed with.

There has been a traditional sense of equality at Montclair, and no religious or racial restrictions have ever been instituted.

One of the most elaborate customs annually observed at Russ Hall is the Christmas celebration. This takes place the day before the students return home for the Christmas holidays. The festivities begin with the old English custom of burning the Yule Log, during which the house chairman of either Russ or Chapin reads a selection of poetry on this topic. The students and members of the faculty, in formal dress, march into the dining room singing Christmas Carols. President and Mrs. Sprague assume the roles of king and queen. The traditional Boor’s Head is brought in and placed before them. Two girls, accompanied by a number of waits, enter carrying a huge chicken pie decorated with blackbirds, and singing, “Four—and—Twenty Blackbirds.” Mrs. Sprague cuts the pie which is then passed to the guests. The dinner is topped off with the eating of the Xmas plum pudding. They then retire to the living room where a program of entertainment has been arranged. Dancing follows at Chapin Hall. Everyone then returns to his room, dons snowsuit or slacks and goes caroling. After this, the students go back to the dormitories where they are considered “sissies” is they refuse to stay up all night attending parties in various rooms. The next day, students sleep through their classes.
The custom of the dinner and entertainment was introduced by Dr. McEachern and is arranged by her each year.

A formal dinner is also held at Thanksgiving, but is not prepared quite so elaborately.

Thus we see that Montclair has many traditions which endear it to the hearts of all its students.

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