



"One Day in May"

One Day in Other Years

As part of our preparations for "One Day in May" 2020, I looked for information about how students and alumni experienced May 15 on three randomly selected years in the past.

- smv

May 15, 1852

With the help of Marie Ester Brandt's diary, we can imagine traveling back in time all the way to 1852. On May 15 of that year, she wrote "Weather, more pleasant. Cecile went to Madison. Have been busy all day. Will Milsap brought "Foster on Calvinism" and "Bascum's Sermons" for us to read." Brandt lived in the town of Hanover, and her family rented rooms to Hanover students. So we can imagine students stopping to chat with her while she worked on sewing or cleaning the rugs (chores she mentioned that week). I wonder if they noticed her being visibly unhappy. She'd gotten a letter the previous day saying that her sister in Illinois was dying: "This is my birthday and sad news it brought," she'd written that day.¹



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Electronic Submission

This diary is a treasure for the window it gives into life at Hanover in its early years, but there are so many more everyday details that we can't know. What kind of dinner did she serve the students who lived in her house? Did the students ever sing around a piano with the Brandts in the evening? What did they see in the morning on their walk from her house to campus? What was it like to sit in one of their classrooms?

May 15, 1918

Winfield Scott Smith graduated from Hanover in 1888, and on the morning of May 15, 1918, he was at the Madison train station. It was a nice day to sit outside waiting for his train (cool in the morning and warming up to 79 degrees by afternoon). He must have chatted with a reporter hanging out at the station -- because the local paper reported that Smith had been in Hanover "for the purpose of visiting old scenes and renewing old acquaintances." It was his first time back in twenty-five years, and he must have noticed lots of changes. What we call Hendricks Hall was new to him, and he'd also have noticed a new gym, a repurposed women's dorm, and a new fraternity house. At least some of the campus buildings had electricity, which certainly hadn't been true when he'd been a student. Even the train station where he sat chatting with the reporter would have been new to him (built in 1895).²



It's wonderful to be able to reconstruct this moment in Smith's life, but there's so much more we would like to know. How did he get from Hanover to the train station, and what did he carry in his luggage? Who were the old acquaintances he met, and what did they talk about? He was a respected Presbyterian minister in 1918, but did he show a different side to his long-time friends, laughing together about their youthful highjinks? Did they sit together, listening to the birds and watching the traffic on the Ohio? Were there professors they remembered fondly? life lessons learned?

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May 15, 1971

It turns out that May 15 was Family Day in 1971, so if you went back in time to that day, you might have seen students walking around, showing off the campus to their parents. You could stop by a morning coffee reception at the President's home, and then maybe join some of the students and their families for a "steak luncheon" at the Campus Center. In the afternoon, you could go to a baseball double header or a track meet. It was nice weather for it (no rain and a high of 75 degrees). But if you wanted to stay indoors, you could take a dip in the Campus Center pool. (The College had extra swimsuits to loan out, in sizes for teenagers and adults.)³



We know all this from the student newspaper and historical weather data. What we don't know are the everyday details. What did the coffee taste like and how was it served? What could you see when you walked across campus in the sunshine - were people playing frisbee? lying on the grass? Could you hear music coming out of open dorm room windows? Were students studying in the library or working in the biology lab?

¹ Marie Ester Brandt diary, 12-17 May 1852, microfilm, Duggan Library, Hanover College (Hanover, Ind.). (Photo is available at <https://palni.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/hcarchive/id/259/rec/3> [accessed 15 May 2020].)

² "Rev. W.S. Smith, of Badnon, Ore," *Madison (Indiana) Courier*, 15 May 1918, p. 6; "Weather Forecast," *ibid.*; "Hanover College History Timeline," Duggan Library Archives, Hanover College, <https://libguides.hanover.edu/archives/history> (accessed 15 May 2020); "Madison Railroad Station," National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/madison/Madison_Railroad_Station.html (accessed 15 May 2020). (Photo is from "Madison Railroad Station," *ibid.*)

³ "Family Day," *Triangle*, Hanover College, 14 May 1971, 1; "Louisville, KY Weather History" for 15 May 1971, *Weather Underground*, <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/KSDF/date/1971-5-15> (accessed 15 May 2020). (Photo is available at <https://palni.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/hcarchive/id/167/rec/1> [accessed 15 May 2020].)

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