On April 12, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died at Warm Springs, Georgia. Elected to four terms in office, Roosevelt served from 1933 to 1945, longer than any other president of the United States. After 12 tumultuous years, the reigns of power changed hands in Washington, D.C.

In Long Branch, New Jersey, Edward G. Schlaefer who began as dean of the junior college in 1933 remained at the helm at Monmouth. Schlaefer would continue at the school, started as an emergency program under Roosevelt, throughout its tenure at the Long Branch High School and beyond.

Although now indelibly linked with Wilson Hall, the former Shadow Lawn Mansion, Monmouth Junior College had enrolled more than 7,000 students over nearly a quarter century before moving to the palatial estate in West Long Branch in 1956.

The day-to-day routine that allowed Monmouth Junior College to occupy the same building as the Long Branch High School varied little from the privations of the Great Depression through the energetic growth following World War II.

"Desks must be cleared, rooms left blank and impersonal for whatever class the college might put in there," recalls Nancy Schlaefer Bruch ’58. Bruch, daughter of Dean Schlaefer, remembers that the college’s relationship with the high school was always a little edgy.

"For the most part, the high school teachers were not happy about having to clear out of the building by four in the afternoon, at which time the college would take over," she said.

"The janitorial staff had scarcely an hour to clean the building. One teacher of senior English who ruled the roost, and the principal as well, made dire threats should the upstart college interfere with her arrangements."

Returning veterans had saved Monmouth Junior College, but increasing
enrollment exacerbated tensions over limited space. In an editorial dated February 26, 1946, Dean Schlaefer observed that “the biggest education boom in our academic history has contributed to the growth of the junior colleges in the past year. Many of them were forced to close during the war and re-opened...doubling their enrollment.”

A later story in the October 16, 1946 edition of The Outlook cautiously celebrated a 200% increase in the student body. The “largest co-ed enrollment in the 13-year history of Monmouth Junior College has taxed the facilities of both faculty and building to the utmost and is correlated with the nationwide quest for education, particularly on the part of service men.”

Enrollment jumped from a “record high of 344 registrations” in March of 1946 to more than 600 students in February of 1948.

Academic Accreditation and Advancement

In late 1947, following years of effort seeking the privilege, the New Jersey State Department of Education accredited Monmouth Junior College to award Associate in Arts (A.A.) degrees. Only the second New Jersey junior college granted such authority, the change meant that “there must be strict adherence to standards set by the State Department, and at least one-fourth of the teachers must hold the Ph.D.,” read a cover story in the October 3, 1947 issue of The Outlook.

Until then Monmouth had been limited to awarding diplomas and relying on transfer agreements with other institutions to validate the value of MJC academic credentials.

A different article in the same October 1947 issue noted that scores of students entered other colleges. With a steady increase in enrollment thanks to the new A.A. degree program, students who transferred away to other schools were seen as a source of academic and institutional pride rather than as contributing to a loss of revenue or decline in enrollment.

The State resolution of approving MJC to grant official degrees, the 1947 Outlook said, “symbolizes the constant effort of Dean Schlaefer, who has unceasingly worked for the full recognition and growth of the college. It adds prestige to the credits of students seeking transfer. It has materially caused an increase in enrollment.” The first degrees were awarded in June 1948.

One hundred students, “the largest graduating class in the history of Monmouth Junior College,” received engraved diplomas in June of 1948. “To commemorate [the] occasion the office is procuring leather encased, engraved diplomas, as well as engraved invitations to the exercises,” read a notice in the April 12, 1948 issue of The Outlook. Non-veteran graduates were required to pay a $10 graduation fee.

The change in status wasn’t enough to overcome occasional complaints of lackluster school spirit, or muster the resources needed to publish a yearbook. Editorials, letters to the editor and even cartoons in The Outlook throughout 1947 and 1948 repeatedly called for a yearbook, or emphasized the Sisyphean nature of the task.

“After studying the problem,” a March 11, 1948, editorial declared, “the Outlook has come to the conclusion that the student body does not even know that M.J.C. has school colors. We have two, for your information, orange and black. The only way those colors could be changed to something more pleasing to the eye, such as scarlet and white...would be if a majority of students petitioned the Board of Directors to change them.”

Almost a third of Monmouth’s history happened outside the boundaries of our current campus.

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The first Monmouth yearbook was finally published in June of 1949, 16 years after the first issue of The Outlook and two years after Monmouth earned the right to confer Associate in Arts degrees.

Although incredible by the litigious standards of the early 21st century, Monmouth did not officially incorporate until May 13, 1948, 15 years after opening its doors. Regulations to “incorporate associations not for pecuniary profit” had been on the books in New Jersey since 1898. Incorporation may have been a State requirement...
for granting degrees, or it may have reflected the newfound stability of the junior college.

In 1949 Monmouth began its sixth year of cooperation with the Monmouth Memorial (now Monmouth Medical Center) School of Nursing and the Ann May School of Nursing at Fitkin Memorial Hospital (now Jersey Shore University Medical Center) in the pre-clinical training of student nurses.

Monmouth gained further academic prestige in 1952 with accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Founded in 1887, the Association initially offered accreditation to four-year colleges and universities and traditional high schools. Not until the mid-fifties did Middle States introduce the ten-year cycle of accreditation that exists today.

Then as now, accreditation was vital to the reputation and survival of the school. “Accreditation by Middle States...gives everyone a sense of security in realizing that our stability is recognized,” said one anonymous staffer in the May 13, 1952 issue of The Outlook.

The same article described Middle States as “the third and most valuable rating the college has received during its 19-year history. In 1940 it was granted accreditation by the State Department of Education to award diplomas. In 1947 the state approved the college to award the Associate in Arts degree.”

Growing Pains

“Until about 1950,” remembers Bruch, “the college office was located in the former Teachers’ Lounge of the High School. Don’t know where the teachers fled to during those years. The room was long and so narrow that two desks could not be placed across it, making for a zig-zag course to the far end, and lit by a 10-12-foot window. A secretary-receptionist occupied the desk nearest the door. Behind her sat the bursar and maybe his secretary, then Dad [Dean Schlaefer] and Helen [Wardell].”

“It was a big day when the college was able to buy a house across Westwood Avenue and convert it carefully to meet their needs without relinquishing the ability to resell it as a home. The space was sorely needed for, after the influx of students after the war, the student body continued to grow, becoming just too great for half a dozen people to handle.

“About that time,” Bruch said, “a counseling office was started under Albert T. Ball (indeed, a cousin of Lucille), an assistant dean was hired, and the secretarial staff increased. The finished room in the basement of the building gave the college its first locale for group meetings. It was soon scheduled tight with the various clubs, societies, even faculty groups.

Looking Forward

“From about 1945 on,” remembers Nancy Schlaefer Bruch, “different large properties along the Shore were investigated as possible sites for a new campus. One evening, the Schlaefer family drove down Norwood Avenue and paused on the westward side at the gate of the drive to a tall, two- or three-story white stucco Italianate building with a red tile roof. What did we think about that as a site? We also looked at others through their hedges, including Shadow Lawn, which seemed enticingly out of reach as it was occupied first by a boys’ military school, then a girls’ school.”

“Occasionally, Dad [Dean Schlaefer] would meet with Eugene Lehman, the proprietor of the for-profit Highland Manor School for Girls. For many years, not much ever came of these discussions except that both knew that the other was available.”

In his Early History of West Long Branch New Jersey, former Monmouth College librarian Robert F. Van Benthuyzen wrote, “After 20 years of late afternoon and evening classes...the college needed more space and provision...
Dr. Yolanda Mapp

The career of Yolanda Mapp, MD, FACP, and member of the Monmouth Junior College class of 1951 illustrates the unique role that Monmouth Junior College played in the community following World War II.

After graduating from nearby Red Bank High School in 1948, Yolanda spent three years at Monmouth Junior College, where she earned her Associate in Arts degree. Yolanda was active in virtually every club or association on campus including the Student Council, the Lambda Sigma Tau honor society, Cheerleading, the Women’s Athletic Association, the French Club, German Club, Spanish Club, and the Psychology Club.

After graduation, she attended the New Jersey College for Women at Rutgers University, receiving a Bachelor's of Science in Chemistry and Bacteriology. After Rutgers, Yolanda continued her academic climb, ultimately earning her medical degree at Howard University College of Medicine.

Following a series of internships and fellowships, Dr. Mapp was appointed an instructor of Medicine at Hahnemann Medical School in 1962. She went on to become a professor and instructor at Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia and Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta.

In June of 2000 Dr. Mapp retired from Temple University School of Medicine as an associate professor of medicine. In 2003 she was named to the Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame by the Red Bank Regional Education Foundation. She is now the namesake of the Dr. Yolanda Mapp Scholarship sponsored by the Cherry Hill African American Civic Association. The educational opportunity offered at Monmouth Junior College was a vital link in the academic and medical career of a distinguished African American physician and educator.

Most people cannot say they practiced Kung Fu with monks in China, or speak Chinese Japanese, French, German and Spanish, but Yolanda Mapp ’51 can. Read more about Dr. Mapp’s life in an upcoming issue of the Monmouth University Magazine.

had to be made for day-time instructional hours. There was a growing demand for higher education, and the time was appropriate for expanding to a four-year program.”

By 1953 it became apparent to the Board of Trustees that the high school was becoming inadequate for the operation of the Junior College. The Board began to investigate the purchase of a campus of its own.

An unpublished “History of the Acquisition of Shadow Lawn and Beechwood Campuses,” written in 1976 by Dr. William M. Smith (former Chairman of the Board of Trustees), Milton Cranmer (former Monmouth College attorney), and Walt Withey (former Vice President of Business Affairs at Monmouth College), recounts the events culminating in the move out of Long Branch.

“The Board first visited the Liedesdorf estate on Norwood Avenue; another property which was considered was the broadcasting station of AT&T on Deal Road; at another time the estate or part of the estate of Mrs. Louis S. Thompson in Lincroft was considered. None of these sites was acquired.”

Dean Schlaefer began to have more
frequent contact with Eugene and Elizabeth Lehman. He discovered that
the Lehmans were considering the sale of the purchase contract for the Shadow Lawn Estate and adjoining real estate.

Bruch remembers, “In 1955, the pace stepped up to a come-hither-go-away process. There was an interest in selling; there was no intention of selling. A price was suggested -and then doubled -or withdrawn.”

Robert Schlaefer ‘60 vividly remembers waiting alone in his father’s car for hours during one marathon negotiation session with Eugene Lehman.

Eventually, progress was made when West Long Branch and Maurice Pollak were persuaded to withdraw the deed restriction that prohibited boys on the property, the result of an earlier school for boys. Although at first watchful and cautious, Mr. Pollak became a firm supporter of the college. The eponym of Pollak Theatre, he became a Life Trustee in 1984 after serving on the Board for 26 years.

Protracted Negotiations
“The description of an event is frequently distorted by the passage of time and the interpretation of the one describing the alleged details,” begins the chronicle of events surrounding the purchase of Shadow Lawn set down by Smith, Cranmer and Withey. The participants believed the details of the transaction were important enough to set down for posterity.

“By resolution of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of West Long Branch, dated March 9, 1955, consent was given to the assignment by Eugene Lehman to Monmouth Junior College of his purchase contract for the Shadow Lawn property. On March 11, 1955 Charles L. Morgan, Lehman’s attorney, was notified of the intention of Monmouth Junior College to proceed with the purchase of the Shadow Lawn and Beechwood properties in accordance with the agreement dated February 4, 1955.”

By agreement dated April 1, 1955 between Eugene H. Lehman and Elizabeth N. Lehman and Monmouth Junior College, the Lehmans agreed to sell and the College agreed to buy Lehman’s purchase contract for the Shadow Lawn property and title to the Beechwood property.

Because the sale included the contents of both places, the College paid an additional deposit for a total of $15,000.00. Even today, it is not unusual to find books stamped “Property of Highland Manor” while browsing the stacks of the Monmouth University Library. Like the name, “Woodrow Wilson Hall,” the books are quiet relics of the Highland Manor School for Girls.
Robert Schlaefer, son of Dean Edward Schlaefer, recently recounted the graduation ceremony that became tradition for many years while Monmouth Junior College was located in the Long Branch Senior High School.

“The full name of the graduation procession march that was used during all the years Monmouth Junior College was in the Long Branch Senior High School was "War March of the Priests" [from Athalia] by Mendelssohn.

I can guarantee that hearing this music again will fill the eyes with tears and the hearts of any Monmouth Junior College graduate with nostalgia. It is a beautiful slow march and is seldom heard today.*

Here is the graduation scene when the "Priest’s March" was played: Long Branch High School Auditorium - evening - early June - The stage is lined with baskets of lilacs and peonies that are blooming at this time of the year. At seven thirty o’clock the double doors open at the corners of the auditorium adjacent to the stage and on cue an ensemble of several musicians sitting near the apron of the stage strike the opening notes of the “Priest’s March”. The musicians play a piano, 2 violins, a cello, and a bass. Students and faculty are in traditional graduation gowns.

Two lines of students begin to file in led on one side by Dean Schlaefer and the other side by a faculty member. Both lines file around the back of the auditorium and down the center aisle and fill the seats in the front of the auditorium. Friends and family sit behind the students.

Dean Schlaefer proceeds to the steps of the stage and goes to his seat on stage. Accompanying him is Dr. Wesley Camp, faculty member, who will read each name on the A.A. diplomas before handing the diplomas to Joseph Erwin from the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Joseph Erwin (always dressed in a white suit and shoes) will hand each student his or her diploma.

The diploma covers are black with orange writing on the front. These are the college’s colors at this time. Also seated on stage is a member of the clergy for the invocation and benediction, the guest speaker for the occasion, and a student speaker.

Dean Schlaefer will ask that applause be held until all degree recipients have received their diplomas. At the conclusion of the ceremony, everyone including the musicians goes to the gym for a reception. The gym is decorated with palms and streamers and the musicians play waltzes and fox-trots. Tables are arranged with cookies and punch made from ginger ale and raspberry sherbet. The reception lasts for about an hour. Everything is cleaned away in preparation for the Long Branch High School the next morning."

*To hear an enthusiastic version of the ”Priest’s March” by The Almost Perfect Fifth visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-Ehp0CF0

From February 4, 1955 to July 2, 1956 several contracts were drawn by Milton P. Cranmer, all representing matters agreed upon by Lehmans and the College.

“Even though the initial contract embodied everything in agreement, Lehman refused to sign and insisted on additional items. This resulted in a second contract which Lehman again refused to sign,” reads the record left by Smith, Withey, and Cranmer.

“This process was continued on several occasions, up to and including an all day session in the office of Milton P. Cranmer on Saturday, June 30, 1956, at which time Lehman, with pen in hand, suddenly changed his mind and stated that he would not even go through with the closing on July 2, 1956. He finally reversed himself and the closing was held.”

Then came 1956. **MU**