

TRANSACTIONS OF THE BURGON SOCIETY

Volume 9



Special North American Issue



THE BURGON SOCIETY

Founded to promote the study of Academical Dress

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on its website at www.burgon.org.uk**

Transactions of the Burgon Society

Volume 9 (for 2009)

Special North American Issue

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Front cover: Frederick A. P. Barnard, president of Columbia University, 1864–89, painted by Eastman Johnson in 1886. Barnard is wearing what is probably a prototype of the Doctor of Law dress gown in the scheme of academic dress proposed by a special committee (on which the president himself sat) and approved in 1887. It will have become obsolete with the adoption of the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume in 1895. (Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of Columbia University.)

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Burgon Society Events in 2009

- 7 March** **Visit to Ede & Ravenscroft**
Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire
- 25 April** **Study Day**
Offices of Deloitte, 180 Strand, London
Programme included:
Illustrated talks
 Kenneth Crawford — *The Hidden Stitchery in Academical Dress: Inside a Hood*
 Michael Brewer — *Academic Dress in Canterbury*
Workshop
 Nicholas Groves and Colin Fleming — *Back to Basics*
- 4 July** **Garden Party**
St George's College, Weybridge
Programme included:
Auction of items of academical dress
- 10 October** **Special General Meeting, AGM and Congregation**
Charterhouse, London
Special General Meeting on the adoption of a new Constitution
Annual General Meeting
Admission to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society:
 Dr Richard Baker (by submission — *The Academic Dress of the University of Hull 1954 to the Present Day, and Including the Hull York Medical School from 2003*)
 Michael Brewer (by submission — *Academic Dress in Canterbury*)
 Dr Donald L. Drakeman (by submission — *Peculiar Habits: Academic Costumes at Princeton University*) in absentia
 Professor John N. Grant (by submission — *Many Coloured Coats: The Systems of Academical Dress in Nova Scotian Universities*) in absentia
 Stephen L. Wolgast (by submission — *King's Crowns: Academic Dress at King's College and Columbia University*)
 Paul Fielder (*honoris causa*)
Talk by Stephen L. Wolgast on the academic dress of
 Columbia University

From the Editors

Thoughts of historical academic dress in Europe conjure Paris and Bologna, purple robes, fur-trimmed capes and scarves, the *épitoge* and pill-box hats. England is known for its complex rules, Archbishop Laud, and its place as the guiding star of New World cap, gown and hood.

Think of the United States, however, and you come up with the Code. Canada fares better because its prominent universities set their own rules for academic dress rather than following a national standard. A few, however, chose to follow their southern neighbours' standards.

This volume of the *Transactions* explains how the two national traditions came to be. In the case of Canada, we examine Nova Scotian universities and their associations with Great Britain. Oxford and Cambridge were natural sources of inspiration, but, as the name of the province suggests, the influence of Edinburgh is evident as well. Of course, the French system is followed at several Canadian universities, including one in Nova Scotia.

Colleges in the United States adopted academic dress before the nation was founded. The authors relate the place of gowns in the codes of conduct of several colonial colleges, first as a disciplinary tool and later as an article of student pride. In the late nineteenth century, graduates of at least six American colleges wore coloured gowns of their own design. Pennsylvania, for example, did away with hoods altogether and replaced them with a yoke coloured for the faculty.

When the papers were submitted, the authors who wrote about Harvard, Princeton and Columbia each included detailed sections on the origin of the Intercollegiate Code and later changes to it. Instead of repeating key information, we chose to combine those details, along with a selection of broader trends identified by the authors of articles about the Code itself, into one introductory piece. It appears first, and even though that placement takes it out of chronological order, we feel it best to cover the topic thoroughly before moving on because it was the Code that earlier developments contributed to, and it is the Code that later developments reacted to.

One article explains the challenges of hand-making a doctoral gown in the Code pattern. In an age when 'souvenir' gowns are made to the lowest possible standards, and when machine-made gowns are generally considered to be the top of the line, it is refreshing to see that in the hands of a skilled tailor a gown can fit as well as a hand-made suit.

We believe you will discover in these pages that academic dress in North America has a history far richer than it is given credit for, and that its current state demonstrates a creativity greater than the Code would seem to permit.

Although papers on academic dress outside Great Britain (including one on Toronto) have been published in previous volumes, this special issue has provided

a welcome opportunity to broaden the range. We hope it fosters the beginning of a trend. The Society will grow stronger when its future issues report on developments in other parts of the world alongside work on design, history and practice in the British tradition.

Stephen L. Wolgast

Alex Kerr

Note:

To identify shapes of hoods and gowns, the authors use the classification devised by Nicholas Groves, in which commonly used shapes are catalogued and identified by a combination of letter and number. For example, the Burgon shape hood is [s2] and an Oxford MA gown is [m1]. The complete list is available on-line at <<http://www.burgon.org.uk/design/groves.php>>.