

A Short History of Drew University

Drew University was conceived in 1866 when there arose a growing demand for organized theological education in the Methodist Episcopal Church (that year was also the centenary of American Methodism). In response to this need, [Daniel Drew](#), a Wall Street financier and steamboat tycoon, offered \$250,000 to found the Drew Theological Seminary. In 1867, the first students arrived at "The Forest," the former Gibbons estate in Madison, New Jersey. [President John McClintock](#) and four professors presided over the first class of Seminarians, even before the school received its [New Jersey Charter in 1868](#).

Through great financial distress and five presidents, Drew remained a training ground for hundreds of Methodist ministers. During the presidency of Ezra Tipple, however, the small seminary evolved into a university. In 1920, the seminary introduced a College of Missions, which offered a regular course of study for [women](#). In 1928, Arthur and Leonard Baldwin offered [President Tipple](#) \$1.5 million to build and endow an undergraduate college of liberal arts. The first class of all-male [Brothers College](#) began study in September 1928. With the addition of the aptly named Brothers College, Drew Theological Seminary became Drew University. In 1929, the College of Missions was reorganized into the short-lived College of Religious Education and Missions. Two years later, the seminary benefited greatly from a large bequest from the [Wendel](#) family; the money both allowed and encouraged the two schools (the seminary and Brothers College) to operate as nearly separate entities. In 1942-43, Brothers College became coeducational, during a time when many of the College's men were overseas and the U.S. Navy operated a V-12 program on campus.

In the 1950s, Brothers College became more widely known as the College of Liberal Arts, and the seminary became known as the Theological School. In 1955, a Graduate School that emphasized theological studies was established; four years later, a humanities program was added. Degree-oriented continuing education programs became part of the curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1999, the Graduate School was renamed the Caspersen School in honor of Trustee Barbara Morris Caspersen and her husband, Finn, who pledged \$5 million to the university for the graduate school.

Source:

- Cunningham, John. *University in the Forest: The Story of Drew University*. Third edition, 2002.

Courtesy of the [Drew University Archives](#)