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History of the Status of Minority Groups in the Bryn Mawr Student Body

The history of diversity at Bryn Mawr has been recorded and examined in very sporadic ways and is not easily traced. Nor is it easily understood outside of the context of the history of American society and especially of higher education within that society. It is not, however, a simple matter to provide context for an examination of the history of diversity at Bryn Mawr. Of the three published histories or collections of reminiscences of the College, none contains information on this issue. [They are: *What Makes a College? A History of Bryn Mawr* by Cornelia Meigs (1956, Macmillan), *Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr* by Edith Finch (1947, Harper and Bros.), and *A Century Recalled: Essays in Honor of Bryn Mawr College* (1987, Bryn Mawr College Library).] The racial and ethnic composition of classes was not recorded until quite recent times. Pieces of the history which seem very important are missing. We know, for instance, nothing of the first black student at Bryn Mawr except that she came in the '20's and stayed only one week.

What follows is a chronologically organized selection of the materials available in the archives and the M. Carey Thomas papers. It does not represent all of the evidence available. Since the *College News* is indexed only to the 1940's and the newer *Bryn Mawr-Haverford News* is not indexed at all, one would need to read very thoroughly in those back issues to get the fullest possible picture of recent decades. There are also letters and oral histories from individual alumnae which would be useful, as well as living alumnae, staff, and faculty members who should be interviewed to make the account more complete. And any thorough history of diversity at Bryn Mawr would include more kinds of difference and look at the history of the staff and faculty as well. The attempt here is to suggest a rough time line for the inclusion of black, Jewish, and Asian students at Bryn Mawr. It is a very unfinished beginning to the history of diversity at Bryn Mawr.

1877

To start at the beginning, it is useful to remember the text of Dr. Joseph Taylor's will in which he dedicated his estate to the establishment of a college for the "advanced education of females." It is dated January 19, 1877. He directed that his money be used to erect buildings "for the comfort advanced education and care of young women, or girls of the higher classes of society." Preference in admission was to go to members of the Society of Friends, but in all cases those were to be preferred who were "of high moral and