Commemorating Women’s History Month at Penn

By 1930, the women at the University of Pennsylvania were competing in an ever-growing variety of sports, coached by a growing staff of instructors: basketball, fencing, hockey, riflery and swimming, as well as the minor sports of archery, baseball, horseback riding, tennis and track. In 1925, the women’s tennis courts were replaced by Bennett Hall as the main building for Penn’s College for Women, and on the third floor of this new building was a gymnasium for women.

In 1952, some 203 years after Benjamin Franklin organized the first Trustees and 25 years after the Trustees were divided into three classes—Life, Term and Alumni Trustees—a woman was elected one of the Term Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1976, 100 years after women first enrolled in the College as “special students,” the University had become fully coeducational.

In 1983, the first Penn woman recipient of a Rhodes Scholarship was named.

In 1993, Claire Fagin was appointed to a one-year term as interim president and chief executive, the first woman to serve as Penn’s chief executive.

Judith Stein Rodin became the first Penn alumnus, C’56, to serve as Penn’s president, 1994-2004, and the first woman to serve as president of an Ivy League institution.

In 1914, the University of Pennsylvania’s department of medicine granted Miss Gault permission to take a course, “Dietetics of Sick,” from February-June 1914. This admission ticket for one of the first lectures for women was signed by Dean William Pepper, son of Penn’s 11th Provost, (1881-1894).

Women and coaches on the Schuylkill River, with the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the background, in 1935 on the first day women were allowed to row.

See the University of Pennsylvania Archives (http://www.archives.upenn.edu/) for more history, including Women at Penn: Timeline of Pioneers and Achievements, Distinguished Early Graduates, Faculty and Benefactors, Women’s Athletics at Penn, Quotations from Women at Penn and Women’s Oral History Project.