

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

Winter 2007

**Review of *The University of Oklahoma: A History. Volume I, 1890-1917* By David W. Levy**

Patricia Loughlin

*University of Central Oklahoma*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Loughlin, Patricia, "Review of *The University of Oklahoma: A History. Volume I, 1890-1917* By David W. Levy" (2007). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1521.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1521>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

*The University of Oklahoma: A History. Volume I, 1890-1917.* By David W. Levy. Foreword by David L. Boren. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. xxiii + 312 pp. Photographs, notes, works cited, index. \$29.95.

A research project fifteen years in the making, David W. Levy's first volume in a series of three on the institutional history of the University of

Oklahoma invites the reader to think about the origins of higher education on the barren Southern Plains during the territorial days. Established in 1890 by the territorial legislature, the University of Oklahoma held its first classes in September 1892 with four instructors and fifty-seven students (half were women) and grew to 2,516 students, 154 faculty members (almost exclusively men) and two campuses by 1917. David Ross Boyd, the university's first president, provided stability and leadership for the initial sixteen years.

Levy, professor of modern American history at the University of Oklahoma, presents two overarching themes in his survey of the first twenty-five years of the university: the pioneering impulse surrounding the university's early development, and political and religious interference during the institution's early years. Levy describes this inspiring story of pioneering as "the typically American impulse—so characteristic of the country's westward movement into new settlements—to improvise, invent, and build for the future." Regarding politics and religion at the turn of the century, Levy states, "Like other Americans, Oklahomans took their religion and their politics very seriously; and the failure of the University to hire Baptists, Southern Methodists, southerners, and Democrats irritated many of them."

Levy deftly chronicles the early years of the University of Oklahoma's development by examining early buildings, biographical sketches of faculty, curriculum, and student activities. His thoroughly researched narrative relies on manuscript collections at the Western History Collections at OU, government documents, and newspapers. Levy calls territorial Norman "an island surrounded by a sea of prairie grass," and the photographs in the volume support such a statement. This is an important contribution to the history of higher education in the Great Plains.

PATRICIA LOUGHLIN  
Department of History and Geography  
University of Central Oklahoma