The Rice Institute inaugurated its first academic year with the enrollment of its first class of students on September the twenty-third, nineteen hundred and twelve.

For nearly two years a program of construction had been under way upon the three-hundred-acre campus lying some three miles from the business center of Houston. Drainage, roadways, buildings, and equipment were being prepared for the beginning of the educational task to which the Institute was dedicated through the generosity of its founder, the late William Marsh Rice.

"Your old men have dreamed this dream and your young men have seen this vision. The age of romance has not gone; it is only beginning. Greater words than the ear of man has heard are waiting to be spoken. Finer arts than the eye of man has seen are sleeping to be awakened -- Science exploring the scope of the world, Poetry breathing the hope of the world, Music to measure and lead the onward march of man."

Thus did the late Dr. Henry Van Dyke greet the Institute's beginning in inspiring verse which called men to the faith and fervor of high idealism, and to a vision of the boundless universe which letters, science, and art held before them.

At the time of its opening in 1912 the buildings of the Institute consisted of the Administration Building, which was temporarily to provide the classroom and library facilities of the new university; the Mechanical Laboratory and Power House, which provided the early laboratories of science and the facilities necessary for light, heat, and power; and the first Residential Hall for Men adequate to meet the first housing requirements. In 1914 the Laboratory for Physics was erected, providing laboratory and research rooms for both physics and biology. In 1916 the Second Residential Hall for Men was begun. In 1920 the Athletic Field House was erected. In 1925 the Laboratory of Chemistry
was completed, materially expanding the Institute's facilities for chemistry and chemical engineering, and for the department of architecture. In 1928 the Faculty Club was erected; while in more recent years additional training space at the Field House has been built, and the grandstands of the athletic field extended.

From the small group of seventy-seven students forming the first class which entered the Institute in 1912, its ranks of undergraduate and graduate students have risen to nearly fourteen hundred. The enrollment of new students is limited at present to four hundred each year, though those applying for admission far exceed this number. Preference is given to candidates for admission who show special promise and capacity for leadership, especially those in the upper half of their high school class.

Along the walks and drives of the Institute's campus, at first bare of shrubbery, long lines of liveoak trees now afford charming shadows and gracefully enhance the beauty of its noble architecture.

In the life of a university a quarter of a century is but a brief span. Its roots are in the learning of the past, and its flowering extends through the centuries. No human institution is more lasting than the university.

The Institute is young among American universities, still its influences from both its faculty and its graduates have extended far and have received warm welcome. With Houston's encouraging progress the second quarter century of the Institute's history will seek to keep pace with the progress of the twenty-five years which have passed. And as the generations flow into the centuries it will hope to hold firm the faith and fervor upon which it was founded.