Tangible Symbols Still Portray
Traditional School Sentiments

By LYN MARTIN

An official shield, colors, mascots and alma mater are traditional symbols used by universities. Rice is no exception. The Rice shield, the colors blue and gray, and the old alma mater, "Rice's Honor," were all adopted when the school began in 1912.

THE SHIELD was designed by M. Pierre de Chaignon la Rose of Cambridge, Mass. His idea was to combine the coats of arms of families bearing the names Rice and Houston.

The arms of both families carried a chevron and birds—crows, ravens, and martlets—as charges. Thus he used double chevrons in the design of the shield but chose the owl of Athena as the bird because of its academic standing.

The CHOICE of colors for the new Institute evidently received a great deal of thought from Dr. Lovett, Rice's first President.

In listing his considerations, he mentions the "combination of colors should be stable, should not trespass on the 500 or 600 combinations already chosen by other institutions, should harmonize with state and national emblems for purposes of decoration on gala occasions, should be standard colors, easily and economically procurable, and finally they should jump with local climatic conditions—that is to say, plenty of color and yet cool in the warm sun of summer, delicate and yet of sufficient life if days perchance be dull."

"AT LEAST some of these ends were attained in the combination of blue and gray ... namely, the Confederate gray enlivened by Oxford blue."

The wisdom of choosing Rice's colors as the school's alma mater is a question which was debated for the first fifty years of the school's existence. As early as 1925 students were questioning the appropriateness of having a fight song as an alma mater.

A THRESHER editorial of that year comments: "The sentiment in the song is not such that it could be used as a commence- ment hymn and be revered as such by all alumni." Further Thresher articles and editorials indicate that the subject remained as a topic for complaint and discussion for thirty-four years before a concrete move was made to remedy the situation.

Then in 1969 the "Papist Hymn" was suggested as an alma mater, but not accepted. In 1960 criticism was brought to a head when President Eisenhower spoke at a Special Convocation. The contrast between the solemnity of the occasion and the football game atmosphere evoked by the song was apparent.

TO FIND A new alma mater then became the task of the Senate. After many and varied opinions were expressed on the part of both students and alumni, a new alma mater to the tune of "Imin" was adopted last year as the result of a student referendum.

Student Association President Mike Jaffe announced that the song would be played "at all customary occasions, including graduations, academic processions, and next year's football games."

MASCOT SAMMY, designed by the architecture department, first appeared at a football game in 1917. Later in the same season, his guardians, careless with their new charge, left him behind after a game with A & M. The Aggies were quick to take advantage of the situation and carried the neglected Owl home with them.

Enterprising Rice students soon formed the Owl Protective Association with the purpose of recovering the bird. Seventeen of their members journeyed to Aggieland and succeeded in regaining Sammy's ex- tinct. As they started home, however, thirteen of their number were captured by the Aggies.

THE REMAINING four first hid in a nearby gully, then, knowing that the Aggies would find them sooner or later, they resorted to cutting off Sammy's outer covering, sticking it under their clothing, and burning the stuffing. Thus they did succeed in bringing home at least a remnant of the original owl.

Such was Sammy's first experience of maltreatment at the hands of his friends. The experience was at an L.S.U game in 1955. While the lights were dimmed at halftime, a half dozen L. S. U. students attempted to steal the bird.

"Noble Owls then rose gallantly to the occasion, the stands emptied in mass," reports the Thresher. But, in spite of their heroic effort, Sammy's left ear was snatched from his head, he suffered a gaping wound in the abdomen, and his claws were wrenched from his perch. The new Sammy, now reigning, is virtually indestructible and is made of fiberglass.