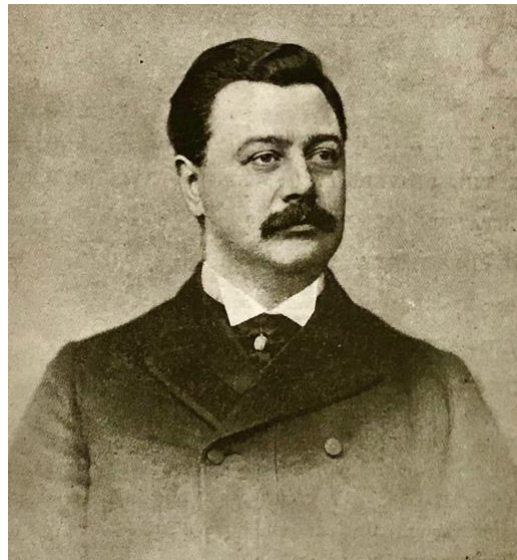


“Knowledge, for what?”¹
Seth Low
and the Governance of
Brooklyn, Columbia University, and New York City
(1881-1903)



2

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¹ Seth Low, “Inaugural Address” (speech, Metropolitan Opera House, 1890) in Ira Harkavy and Lee Benson, “De-Platonizing and Democratizing Education as the Bases of Service Learning,” *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 73 (Spring 1998): 14.

² Walter Livingston, “Columbia’s New President,” *The University*, October 1889.

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³ A quote offered by Columbia President Frederick A. P. Barnard about Seth Low, a member of Columbia College’s Class of 1870. Benjamin R. C. Low, *Seth Low* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1925), 41.

⁴ Untitled, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, February 21, 1889, 116.

⁵ Walter Livingston, “Columbia’s New President,” *The University*, October 1889.

⁶ George Kurland, *Seth Low: The Reformer in an Urban and Industrial Age* (New York: Twayne, 1971), 53.

⁷ Seth Low, “Inaugural Address” (speech, Metropolitan Opera House, February 3, 1890).

⁸ These three archival images visualize three pivotal moments in Low’s career. Percy Friedenber, “Doorway of Hamilton Hall,” Drawings of 49th Street Campus. Series IV: Buildings and Grounds, 1773-1971. UA Map Case Drawer 8, Flat Box 1, f.20. Call Number: UA #0180. Columbia University Archives, Flat Files Collection. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York, NY. Campaign Poster. US Map Case Drawer 8, f.15, Stack 14: “Columbia University Democratic Club, Posters including Seth Low campaign poster, ca. 1900-1912,”

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Thank you, Columbia College, for giving me a chance to join this community.

In Lumine Tuo Videbimus Lumen!

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Michael Leonard Gruber.

Introduction

*“The university does not consist alone of today’s students, but of alumni, living and dead, who should be a source of direct and constant help in our lives...” – Seth Low to Columbia freshmen in 506 Fayerweather Hall, 1900*⁹

In 1871, two brothers arrived at the Brooklyn polls to cast their first votes in a city notorious for its political fraud. Committed to honest elections, one brother struck up a conversation with a policeman to get the inside scoop on Brooklyn’s newest Inspector of Elections. “If that fellow were dead,” the police officer quipped, “I wouldn’t trust him with a five-cent piece on his eyelids.” The curious brother dashed off to file a complaint. Undeterred when his attempted intervention met rejection, he stationed himself at the polls, and “challenged every man who was not entitled to vote.”¹⁰

Within the decade, the inquisitive Seth Low became Inspector of Elections himself. He would build the Brooklyn Bridge and New York’s first research university. He served as mayor of Brooklyn for two terms (1881-1885), president of Columbia University from 1890 to 1901, and mayor of Greater New York City from 1902 to 1903.¹¹ Born in 1850 to a family that “sunk their roots deep into the tenacious and stony New England soil,” made their fortune in the China trade and Brooklyn real estate, and summered in Newport, Seth Low reshaped models of governance in New York.¹² He represented a new generation of the city’s business elite who believed that they had an obligation to provide leadership grounded in the social science of

⁹ “Address to the Freshmen: President Low Speaks to the Class of ’04, College—Advocates the Cultivation of Habits of Industry and Exercise—Says the College Man is Free from Care,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 19, 1900.

¹⁰ All citations in this paragraph derive from Seth Low’s own statements during an interview eight years before his death. James B. Morrow, “Seth Low Discusses Relations Between Employer and Employee,” *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1908, SM3.

¹¹ This thesis uses the capitalized “Greater New York City” when specifying the consolidated unit solidified by the Greater New York City Charter of 1897.

¹² Kurland, *Seth Low*, 12. Citizens’ Union, “Seth Low for mayor: his life and public record,” 1897.

administration. Low constructed channels of cross-fertilization between cities and universities, between the study and practice of public service.

By charting Seth Low's career from 1860 to 1903, this thesis shows how he introduced a new model of leadership by grounding governance in the expert knowledge of social science. Low created a new ideological foundation for elite New Yorkers' political authority, one that envisioned training and organizing constituents with a businessman's efficiency. Through his own commitment to this science of administration, Low fostered a collaboration between the research university and municipal reform that aligned class power with expertise in the name of democracy and social welfare.

This thesis studies a career in the absence of personal papers. Columbia librarians corresponded with Low's widow to assemble a paper collection soon after his 1916 death. However, materials that may have revealed his personality were destroyed, and most of his public writings favored abstraction over the details of his administrative practices. Fragments from his professional career span the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York Municipal Archives, and New York Public Library.¹³ Brooklyn repositories primarily contain images of Low. The frequent absence of his side of correspondence required research in the records of Low's allies and antagonists in Brooklyn, at Columbia, and in Greater New York City.

Current biographies of Low trend toward the hagiographic rather than the historically critical. Low's nephew, Benjamin Low, penned the first biography in 1925. With a poetic cadence, he reminisced on his uncle "sitting comfortably deep in his arm-chair" in Bedford Hills.¹⁴ He celebrates Low especially for possessing a mind that would have propelled him to

¹³ When asked during our interview about the fragmentary nature of Low's papers, a descendant also named Seth Low shared that the majority of Mayor Low's existing materials were in fact "absorbed by Columbia or New York." Seth Low, Telephone Interview by Emily Gruber, November 9, 2018.

¹⁴ Low, *Seth Low*, 19.

achievement in any field, perhaps as “a great surgeon...or a judge, or a bishop.”¹⁵ In 1971, George Kurland recognized Low as a reformer, but gave little attention to his vision of the relations of the research university, social sciences, and political leadership.

Existing scholarship recognizes the significance of the rise of political science as an academic discipline within the American research university between the late 1870s and early 1900s, but has largely not situated that development in relation to the evolving responsibilities and techniques of municipal governance.¹⁶ While historians such as Michael Rosenthal and John Cole touch on the connections between research universities’ political science programs and government, they typically focus on the federal level, on Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson and Columbia’s Dwight Eisenhower. Although John Recchiuti acknowledges that Columbia “trained a pool of educated leaders,” he credits only the professoriate rather than the administration.¹⁷ While biographers have shown how Johns Hopkins’s President Daniel Coit Gilman and the University of Chicago’s President William Rainey Harper engaged in municipal affairs during their administrations, their agenda, unlike Low’s, remained primarily limited in scope to education-related issues.¹⁸

There were, of course, vast differences between governing municipalities and governing universities. As both a mayor and a university administrator, Low confronted the challenges of understanding and answering constituents’ needs, but management of a university remains self-contained relative to that of a city, in which a mayor negotiates with both the electorate and state authorities. Nonetheless, Low reorganized governance in both institutions by introducing new

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶ Thai Jones examines this relation for the mayoralty of John Purroy Mitchel (1914-1917) in *More Powerful Than Dynamite: Radicals Plutocrats, Progressives, and New York’s Year of Anarchy* (2012).

¹⁷ John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive-Era Reform in New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 22.

¹⁸ Daniel Coit Gilman, “Inaugural Address” (speech, Johns Hopkins University, February 22, 1876). “Made His Mark Early: Career of The Distinguished Educator a Busy One,” *The Sun*, January 11, 1906, 5.

bureaucratic structures to support both his programs of reform and efficient budgeting to pay for them. While Low inherited a reform agenda for building a research university from his Columbia predecessor, his mayoral tickets “systematically” pledged change.¹⁹ Fundraising to build a new university campus may not have matched the complexity of overseeing municipal budgets that used taxpayers’ dollars to build a new public school system, but Low approached these projects with the same vision of leadership and accountability.

The political landscape of the 1870s that Low encountered as a recent college graduate poised to partake in politics provided the foundations for his approach to the science of administration. In the turbulent era of Reconstruction, wage earners organized to “strike off the shackles of slavery” and establish an eight-hour workday.²⁰ Such demands ignited a pivotal strike in 1872; approximately two-thirds of the city’s manufacturing workforce opposed “a newly unified manufacturing elite supported by most of the city’s bourgeoisie.”²¹ The economic Panic of 1873 spurred a run on the banks, shut down the Stock Exchange, and triggered a municipal fiscal crisis.²² Scholars of New York City including Edwin Burrows and Michael Wallace argue that this economic depression “overrode middle-class Republican inclinations to respect the ‘rights of labor.’”²³ Concurrent to these crises, Tammany Hall had reclaimed the Manhattan mayor’s office, and in Brooklyn (the nation’s third largest city), Democrats established their own machine.²⁴ In both Manhattan and Brooklyn, charities curbed outdoor relief

¹⁹ “Closing In: The Local Forces in the Political Field,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 4, 1881, 4.

²⁰ “The Eight Hour Crusade: Labor Reform in New York, A Mass Meeting in City Hall,” *New-York Tribune*, May 28, 1872, 8.

²¹ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1012.

²² “The Financial Crisis,” *The New York Times*, September 23, 1873.

²³ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 1026.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1027.

programs and advocated using the principles of social science to distinguish between the worthy and unworthy poor.²⁵

Could democracy survive nineteenth century New York? Americans were unconvinced, as popular politics threatened financial stability and immigration fueled the cities' growth.²⁶ Before the Civil War, business leaders had kept their distance from city politics. Young reformers interpreted the turmoil of the 1870s as their cue to storm the municipal stage and implement order, disinterested leadership, and public service as a vocation.²⁷

Against a backdrop of chaos and corruption, Low navigated the distinctions between city and university administrations by moving toward the model of what historians have called "corporate liberalism" before it became the dominant business ideology of the Progressive Era at the turn of the twentieth century. Low came of age, both as a student and in an early administrative capacity, surrounded by moneyed men who luxuriated in the security of family businesses. By consistently promoting dialogue between capital and labor and advocating the value of the social science expertise to municipal reform, Low revised his own understanding of the science of administration. He set precedents for historian James Weinstein's definition of "the new liberalism of the Progressive Era," one that "put its emphasis on cooperation and social responsibility, as opposed to the unrestrained 'ruthless' competition, so long associated with the businessmen in the age of the Robber Baron."²⁸ Serving a brief term as head of the National Civic Federation, Low enacted "rationalized labor-management relations" that political

²⁵ "County Affairs: The Question of Out-Door Relief," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 3, 1874.

²⁶ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 27.

²⁷ John G. Sproat, *"The Best Men:" Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 9.

²⁸ See also Lustig, Sklar, Cyphers, Allerfeldt, Ernst, Block, Hawley, and Fredman on the politics and ideology of corporate liberalism and the twentieth century Progressive Era. James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State: 1900-1918* (Westport: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), xi.

sociologist Fred Block identifies as a key feature of twentieth century corporate liberalism.²⁹

Seth Low thereby answered his own question: “knowledge, for what?”³⁰ For Seth Low, New Yorkers must marshal knowledge for public service.

With this approach to his administrations, the boy who rooted out dishonesty at the Brooklyn polls in 1871 moved board rooms and ballots—and moved New York governance into the twentieth century.

²⁹ Fred Block, “Beyond Corporate Liberalism,” *Social Problems* 24, no. 3 (February 1977): 353.

³⁰ Harkavy and Benson, “De-Platonizing and Democratizing Education,” 14.

**Chapter I: “The First Scholar in the College:”³¹
Seth Low as a student (1850-1880)**

“What should a University be?”³²

This question confronted readers of Columbia’s *Cap and Gown* newspaper in 1869.³³ The op-ed advocated that Columbia serve as the institution “where our statesmen should be taught the first principles of their science.”³⁴ This reference to the education of future “statesmen” applies to Low, a Columbia junior at the time of the article’s publication. However, the academic discipline of political science did not arrive at Columbia until ten years after Low’s graduation. Therefore, this article raises questions of Columbia’s strategies in the 1860s for preparing its students to govern. A study of Seth Low’s contributions to models of governance must, then, begin with an examination of his education.³⁵

Lincoln Steffens’s analysis of Low supports the decision to commence this thesis with Low’s studies. Steffens emphasized Low’s tendency to address administrative challenges with the same patience and time commitment that propelled him to graduate as Columbia’s Class of 1870 valedictorian. He characterized Low’s governance of Greater New York City with the statement:

He began his mayoralty with a *study* of the affairs of New York; he has said

³¹ A quote offered by Columbia President Frederick A. P. Barnard about Seth Low, a member of Columbia College’s Class of 1870. Low, *Seth Low*, 41.

³² “A Plea for Voluntary Studies,” *Cap and Gown*, February 20, 1869.

³³ Low served as *Cap and Gown* editor the following year. Horace Coon, *Columbia: Colossus on the Hudson* (E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1947), 327.

³⁴ “A Plea for Voluntary Studies,” *Cap and Gown*, February 20, 1869.

³⁵ A note on terminology: this thesis often uses a capital “C” to abbreviate “Columbia College” to “the College” and to distinguish it from the School of the Mines and the School of Political Science. This decision also follows the style used by Robert McCaughey in *Stand Columbia: A History of Columbia University in the City of New York 1754-2004*. As a brief background on this institution’s names, in May 1784, the New York Legislature passed an act to exchange its original name, “King’s College” for “Columbia College in the State of New York;” this revision came at a call to “stress its new world, non-British character.” It was renamed “Columbia College in the City of New York” between 1787 and 1896 until the trustees, under Low’s presidency, pronounced the institution “Columbia University in the City of New York” in May 1896. Robert McCaughey, *Stand Columbia: A History of Columbia University in the City of New York 1754-2004* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 152, 177.

himself that he devoted eight months to its finances; and he mastered this department and is admitted to be the master in detail of every department which has engaged his attention.³⁶

These similarities between Low's methodical approach to his studies and to his administrations draw further attention to the absence of instruction on governance in his formal education.

This chapter situates Low's schooling in lessons gained from the public service-driven Low family, the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, Columbia College (1866-1870), and his entry-level positions.

A "Sober, Righteous, and Godly" Early Education³⁷

Since fragile health postponed Low's formal schooling, it was his family that proved his first educators.³⁸ Born on January 18, 1850 in Brooklyn, Low came of age in a family that, for six generations, epitomized "the traditional manner of English yeoman" in Massachusetts.³⁹ His grandfather and namesake, Seth Low, moved his family of twelve children and wife Mary Porter to Brooklyn in 1829.⁴⁰ In addition to finding success in the drug trade, this elder Low entered New York politics as an alderman and an incorporator of Brooklyn.⁴¹ His son, Abiel Abbot Low (1811-1893), followed his father's example, exchanging public school for a clerk position at Joseph Howard & Co.⁴² Drawing upon his travels to China with his father and his work as a clerk in the South American trade, he entered the China trade in 1840, establishing A. A. Low & Brothers.⁴³

³⁶ Italics added for emphasis. Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York: Sagamore Press, Inc., 1957), 200.

³⁷ Benjamin R. C. Low, *Seth Low* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), 40.

³⁸ James Martin Keating, "Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University, 1889-1901" (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973), 6.

³⁹ Low, *Seth Low*, 26-27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "Was a Merchant Prince: Abiel Abbot Low Was Born in Salem, Mass. Contributed of His Abundance to the Place of His Birth. Financier and Philanthropist, He was Respected and Esteemed," *Boston Daily Globe*, January 8, 1893.

⁴³ Laura Carter Holloway, *Famous American Fortunes and the Men who Have Made Them* (Philadelphia: Bradley & Company 1884), 416.

This firm exported clocks, ginseng, and cotton prints; it imported tea, ginger, rice, nankeens, silk, mattings, bamboo, and lacquered ware from Chinese and Japanese ports.⁴⁴ The company thrived despite the seizing of many ships by Confederate cruisers.⁴⁵ A. A. Low did not serve in the Civil War but worked on the Union Defense Committee alongside Columbia alumnus Hamilton Fish.⁴⁶ Although his attempts to break into the railroad industry did not prove lucrative, Low grew in prominence through his Chamber of Commerce presidency (1863-1867).⁴⁷ He allocated \$5,000 to launch the “Low Educational Fund,” financing college educations for underprivileged students from his native Salem, Massachusetts.⁴⁸

Therefore, A. A. Low provided a model for his son of a Brooklyn administrator who represented the sense of obligation characteristic of the merchant business community in the first half of the 1800s. Although engaged in politics, A. A. Low did not enter the electoral arena, avoiding visibility and risk. His son, however, would push the boundaries of his father’s understanding of a “merchant prince’s” responsibilities, redefining the relation of business elites, to the public realm.⁴⁹

Consequently, before entering school at age seven, Seth Low spent his days with these relatives, these leaders of Brooklyn.⁵⁰ His mother, Ellen Dow, did not survive his birth, leaving behind three other children: Harriette (1842-1884), Abbot Augustus (1844-1912), and Ellen (1846-1884).⁵¹ A. A. Low then married Ann Davison, the widow of his brother, William.⁵² Ann

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 417.

⁴⁶ Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, “Tribute of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York to the Memory of Abiel Abbot Low, President 1863-1867” (New York: Press of the Chamber of Commerce, 1893) 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁸ Holloway, *Famous American Fortunes*, 419.

⁴⁹ “Abiel Abbot Low Is Dead: A Merchant Prince of This City Passes Away,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1893, 16.

⁵⁰ Keating, “Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University,” 7.

⁵¹ Low, *Seth Low*, 38.

⁵² Ibid.

and Ellen both received the reputation that “under their artless femininity were formidable powers.”⁵³ In the wake of William’s passing, A. A. Low had managed Ann’s business matters and served as father to her young son, Will.⁵⁴ Ann returned this kindness by assuming wholeheartedly the role of mother to Seth and his siblings. Despite his caretaker’s suggestion that “such a delicate child was not worth raising,” the few anecdotes preserved from Low’s childhood suggest early glimmers of an impressive mind; he gave his father a dog figurine with the hope that the gift “might enable his father to ‘get used to dogs.’”⁵⁵

Low was the only child of A. A. Low to attend college. Historians note that his brother, Abbot Augustus “Gus” Low “received his education in the family’s shipping and importing business.”⁵⁶ However, he too had ambitions beyond the family business, heading Brooklyn Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and serving on the board of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.⁵⁷ His inventions are said to have included the paper shredder and, upon his death, he trailed only Thomas Edison’s record in registered patents.⁵⁸

Equipped with such exposure to a service-oriented household, Low turned the ambition perceived at home into resolve to graduate at the top of his Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute class in 1866. Low updated his relatives about the marks that he received on assignments. In a letter to his aunt, Harriette Low, he stipulated that his score of 89 11/12 percent in French class “just puts me on the best merit roll and I think it will lead the school.”⁵⁹

“Let the class of Seventy be a bright, a guiding star to thee”⁶⁰

⁵³ Helen Augur, *Tall Ships to Cathay* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1951), 190.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Low, *Seth Low*, 38-39.

⁵⁶ Bill Gove, *Logging Railroads of the Adirondacks* (Syracuse University Press, 2006), 101.

⁵⁷ “Abbot Augustus Low Dies: Brother of ex-Mayor Seth Low and Director in Many Corporations,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1912.

⁵⁸ Gary A. Randorf, *The Adirondacks: Wild Island of Hope* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 90.

⁵⁹ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 19.

⁶⁰ F. A., “Class Poem,” *Columbiad*, April 1869, 29.

As sixteen-year-old Low considered higher education, college enrollment suffered.⁶¹ In 1866, Columbia President Frederick A. P. Barnard noted that “whereas one in forty-one used to pursue a college course, now not more than one in sixty does so.”⁶² The 150 undergraduates enrolled at Columbia in 1865 fell to 116 by 1872.⁶³ At the same time, the School of the Mines, which opened in 1864 with twenty-nine students, three professors, five lecturers, and one assistant, increased rapidly. With an annual tuition of \$160, the School of the Mines outpaced the College, securing approximately one-hundred students in 1867 and doubling the College’s class size beginning in the mid-1870s.⁶⁴

The *Detroit Free Press* diagnosed the eastern colleges’ common recruitment challenges by suggesting that these colleges ought to “have been better adapted to the practical needs of the community.”⁶⁵ It emphasized that the University of Michigan did train its students in pragmatic concerns and both recruited and retained substantial class sizes.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, New Yorkers and the nation viewed Columbia as a “country club for the sons of the wealthy.”⁶⁷

The Columbia admissions process that added Low to the Class of 1870 contextualizes the increasing skepticism from New Yorkers and clarifies Low’s early exposure to higher education’s goals. Although examinations tested English skills and algebra, Classics dominated the program.⁶⁸ Texts including Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Cicero’s orations assessed applicants’ Latin

⁶¹ “College Education,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1866, 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ John Fulton, ed. *Memoirs of Frederick A. P. Barnard, D.D., LL.D., L.H.D., D.C.L. Tenth President of Columbia College in the City of New York*, Compiled by Margaret McMurray Barnard (London: Macmillan and Co., 1896), 364.

⁶⁴ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 154.

⁶⁵ “College Education,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 25, 1866, 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 58.

⁶⁸ *One Hundred and Tenth Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Columbia College for 1863-1864* (New York: The Trustees, 1867), 19.

and Greek syntax.⁶⁹ These evaluations also demonstrated the value that Columbia placed on classical conceptions of civic governance.

With these examinations passed and the \$100 tuition fee paid, Low traded his family's Brooklyn home at 3 Pierrepont Place for Columbia's campus in 1866.⁷⁰ Columbia had moved from Park Place to its site between 49th and 50th Streets on "noisy" Madison Avenue in 1853.⁷¹ Designed by Benjamin Winthrop, this campus enabled Low to remain intimately acquainted with the family firm, since the lack of student dormitories required that he commute daily.⁷²

Dressed in the required academic cap and gown, Low participated in a curriculum that reflected the college's emphasis on antiquity.⁷³ These studies' popularity materialized as Columbia eliminated the \$200 undergraduate Prize for Public and Constitutional Law after Low's sophomore year due to "the small number of students who attend the lectures."⁷⁴ Instead, the freshman reading list included Homer's *Iliad*, Horace's *Odes*, and geometry.⁷⁵ The ancient history class featured units on "The City" and the "Division of the Roman People."⁷⁶ One may extrapolate that such discussions of democracy and urban social systems shaped Low and his classmates' understandings of governance.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ The Committee on the Collegiate Course had advised that, "a change in the locality [of the College] would arouse its slumbering energies, infuse life and vigour into it, and thus promote the object now sought of eventual improvement." Andrew S. Dolkart, *Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 6. Milton Hasley Thomas, "The King's College Building with some notes on its later tenants," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, no. 1 (January 1955): 58.

⁷² Keating, "Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University," 9.

⁷³ This practice was terminated in 1870 due to charges that it "encouraged cheating at examinations." Roger Howson, *His Excellency a Trustee and some other Columbia Pieces* (New York: Columbia University Bookstore, 1945), 201.

⁷⁴ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," June 1, 1868. Columbia University Archives, UA #0019. Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York, NY. (Hereafter: "RBML.")

⁷⁵ *One Hundred and Tenth Annual Catalogue*, 27.

⁷⁶ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," June 3, 1867. RBML.

By commencing his studies each morning at six o'clock to drill ancient Greek for an hour before breakfast, Low rose to Class of 1870 valedictorian.⁷⁷ In 1869, he received the \$150 Second Prize in Greek proficiency.⁷⁸ His studies coincided with a surge of interest in Columbia's library.⁷⁹ The librarian reported, "it is not uncommon for [the students] to remain there during the whole time that the Library is open."⁸⁰ This trend seems significant given Low's work to revamp the library during his presidency.

This academic success came at a cost; Low "held few intimate friends."⁸¹ Student life beyond academics reaffirmed the apathy for higher education. Lists of fraternities packed the pages of Low's yearbook. Low, however, opted to join the editorial staff of the *Cap and Gown* newspaper and to serve as Treasurer of the Burial Committee.⁸²

His classmates' detachment from Columbia's priorities manifested prominently in their reactions to compulsory chapel attendance, a curriculum item that Low himself would later reform.⁸³ In 1869, Low's junior year, the trustees assembled a "special committee to enforce attendance" at chapel, suggesting students had minimal concern or respect for their college's religious mission.⁸⁴ Attempting to manipulate this commitment to faith to their advantage,

⁷⁷ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 20.

⁷⁸ "The Greek Prize," *Cap and Gown*, February 24, 1870, 53. Columbia University Archives. RBML. *Columbiad*, April 1869. CP1 C721, 24. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

⁷⁹ The library acquired 325 volumes in one year alone (1869-1870). Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-," June 3, 1867. RBML.

⁸⁰ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-," February 7, 1870, 492. RBML.

⁸¹ Low, *Seth Low*, 85.

⁸² *Columbiad*, April 1869, 85. RBML.

⁸³ In 1754, the *New York Gazette* published an advertisement written by Anglican minister Samuel Johnson, announcing the opening of "a college on Manhattan Island...the chief thing that is aimed at in this college is to teach and engage the children to *know God in Jesus Christ*." This statement referred to the newborn King's College, demonstrating the shift in attitudes about religious practice in higher education by the late nineteenth century. John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive-Era Reform in New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 21.

⁸⁴ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," February 1, 1869. RBML. Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," March 1, 1869. RBML.

students submitted requests to the trustees for class cancellations on additional religious holidays.”⁸⁵

The engine behind this culture and curriculum was an administrator remembered as “the best at whatever he attempted to do.”⁸⁶ Frederick A.P. Barnard served Columbia as its tenth president for twenty-five years (1864-1889). Despite deafness, he graduated as the youngest member of Yale’s Class of 1828. Barnard’s disdain for the collection of “distressing moral wrecks” whom he called his classmates prompted him to enter the field of higher education.⁸⁷ He initiated a reform agenda that began to confront questions of higher education’s purpose and an administrator’s responsibilities, helping him grapple with this detached student body.

Barnard’s presidency showed Low by example that an “outsider” to higher education could govern Columbia without formal training for the position.⁸⁸ He exemplified an administrator’s ability to balance his own interests with experimentation in emerging disciplines. Himself a physicist and chemist, Barnard delivered an inaugural address titled, “The Relation of the Physical Sciences to Revealed Religion,” calling for the two to be “harmonized” at Columbia.⁸⁹ In addition to the required daily chapel attendance, Barnard built an agenda that reflected his personal curiosity, frequently benefitting the School of the Mines. For example, the trustees accepted his request to purchase American geological surveys.⁹⁰ By invitation, he traveled widely: to England and Germany, the Tyrol and Belgium.⁹¹ He attended the

⁸⁵ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” April 1, 1867.

⁸⁶ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 146.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁸⁸ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 51.

⁸⁹ Interestingly, Low received the epithet “The Great Harmonizer.” Frederick A. P. Barnard, “The Relation of the Physical Sciences to Revealed Religion” (speech, Columbia College in the City of New York, 1864). McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 178.

⁹⁰ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” October 6, 1866. RBML.

⁹¹ Fulton, ed. *Memoirs of Frederick A. P. Barnard*, 363.

International Exposition in Vienna in 1873 and accepted the position of Officer of the Legion of Honor offered by the French government in 1876.⁹²

Veering from his specializations, Barnard helped to introduce the discipline of political science to higher education.⁹³ This development initiated a tradition in which the Columbia administration forged close relationships with the faculty, as demonstrated by Barnard and John Burgess, Columbia's first professor of political science. This partnership concluded only with Barnard's passing, which Burgess called "the saddest [news] which could come to me."⁹⁴ This collaboration reflected the growing interest in social science fields in the northeastern United States. Established in Massachusetts in 1865, the American Social Science Association arose to "get social science a foothold in as many sections of the country as possible."⁹⁵ Given its constitution's pledge to help solve "the great social problems of the day," it is notable that Columbia did not extract inspiration from these models for over a decade.⁹⁶

"Mr. Low has learned the business of New York"⁹⁷

Low's education did not conclude upon receiving his undergraduate degree. As a young man in Brooklyn, Low met a populace that demanded pragmatism from administrators who "directly controlled the lives of thousands of citizens."⁹⁸ His work between graduation and his 1881 election as both Brooklyn's mayor and a Columbia trustee taught him that "politics is

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ See Chapter II for a discussion of this process.

⁹⁴ John William Burgess to Margaret McMurray Barnard. April 28, 1869. Spec Ms Coll Barnard. Call Number: MS #0073, Box 4. Frederick A. P. Barnard Papers, 1831-1889. RBML.

⁹⁵ William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union: Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1944), 297.

⁹⁶ American Social Science Society, "Constitution of the American Association for the Promotion of Social Science," *The Radical*, November 1865, 105.

⁹⁷ This quotation demonstrates Lincoln Steffens's reliance on the language of education to describe Low's preparation for his three chief administrative positions. Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, 200.

⁹⁸ Thai Jones, *More Powerful Than Dynamite: Radicals, Plutocrats, Progressives, and New York's Year of Anarchy* (New York: Walker & Company, 2012), 22.

business.”⁹⁹ This training in a lucrative firm provided Low with hands-on experience in the culture that he would challenge through his early example of corporate liberalism.

“Bred to business” Low graduated with employment secured.¹⁰⁰ After a summer in Europe, he assumed an entry-level position as a clerk in his father’s counting house at 31 Burlington Slip.¹⁰¹ He was entrusted to oversee A. A. Low & Brothers’ raw silk importation from France and the Far East.¹⁰² Low worked alongside his father who taught him to remain “patriotic when patriotism on the part of the leaders in the commercial world was needed.”¹⁰³

Breaking from editorials that satirized his family’s insatiable quest for business ventures, Low also experimented with local public service.¹⁰⁴ This juncture offered Low an education on navigating the strategies, saloons, and scandal built in to Brooklyn politics. As a volunteer visitor to the poor for the County Committee of Charities, Low advocated against Brooklyn’s outdoor relief system, rejecting the allocation of alms “without having the recipient give some labor or service in return.”¹⁰⁵ When this stance resulted in claims that he was “a heartless aristocrat,” Low collaborated with philanthropist Albert White to establish the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities as “a clearing house for the many private and church charitable organizations in the city.”¹⁰⁶ Although Low invited the public to the bureau’s second annual meeting, his explanation that the meeting would convene at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, his old “upper-class college-preparatory and finishing school for young men,” demonstrated lingering privilege.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, 200.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁰¹ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 20.

¹⁰² Keating, “Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University,” 19.

¹⁰³ “Abiel Abbot Low Is Dead: A Merchant Prince of This City Passes Away,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1893.

¹⁰⁴ “The Talk of Brooklyn City: The Food for Gossip Around During the Past Week,” Unidentified Newspaper, Undated. A. A. Low & Bros. “Low Family Scrapbook.” 1834-1875. New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts, New York, NY.

¹⁰⁵ Keating, “Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University,” 20-21.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 21

¹⁰⁷ Seth Low, “Bureau of Charities,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 8, 1870. Cynthia Sanz, “Brooklyn’s Polytech, A Storybook Success,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1986.

Eager to affirm his business skills' application to political activism on behalf of democracy, he "took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves," and engaged in the Brooklyn Young Republican Club.¹⁰⁸ Elected president in 1880, Low claimed responsibility for approximately 850 votes for the Republican ticket.¹⁰⁹ This work evokes the *Cap and Gown* editorials of Low's undergraduate years that lamented Columbia's inability to keep pace with other prestigious colleges that coached their young men to win Congress seats.¹¹⁰ Within a decade of graduation, Low had begun to upend this apolitical pattern.

In 1880, Low wed Anne Wroe Scollay Curtis (1847-1929), daughter of United States Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Curtis. She served as a trustee of Barnard College (established in 1889), member of the Committee of the Civic Federation, and trusted spouse.¹¹¹ Anne Low likely helped to influence her husband's opinion on women's pivotal place in civic reform.¹¹²

Even as Low accumulated this education beyond the classroom, his commitment to Columbia persisted. Low's Alumni Association participation educated him in fundraising and college politics. Under the leadership of Hamilton Fish, Low solicited gifts from his former classmates with gusto. Columbia alumni ultimately gathered at Delmonico's restaurant to elect Low as President of the Alumni Association, cuing "singing" and celebration from the audience.¹¹³ Despite Low's centrality to these fundraising campaigns, the Columbia endowment fund stagnated due to an "apathetic alumni" base.¹¹⁴ However, Columbia valued Low's perseverance.¹¹⁵ A vote in 1881 would prove it.

¹⁰⁸ Low, *Seth Low*, 48.

¹⁰⁹ "Brooklyn's Young Republicans: The Good Work Done by the Club in the Last Campaign," *New York Times*, January 30, 1881.

¹¹⁰ "College Men in Congress," *Cap and Gown*, June 16, 1870, 69-70. RBML.

¹¹¹ Low, *Seth Low*, 43.

¹¹² Annie W.S. Low to Dr. Canfield, January 13, 1909. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1879-1930. RBML.

¹¹³ "The Meeting of the Alumni Association," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 13, 1884.

¹¹⁴ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 51.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Chapter II: “In other words, ‘get a move on’...Trustees:”¹¹⁶
Seth Low as Columbia Trustee (1881-1889)

“Counting the ballots, Seth Low was found to be duly elected,” recorded the 1881 minutes of the Columbia University Trustees.¹¹⁷ Low thereby returned to Alma Mater in his first administrative capacity.¹¹⁸ Membership at this table of high power New Yorkers positioned Low to react to business empires’ tightening grip on Gotham.

As Low settled into his trustee seat, William Henry Vanderbilt—heir to a shipping and railroad-based fortune—used his \$60,000,000 inheritance to build the first Vanderbilt brownstone mansion.¹¹⁹ Newspapers of the 1800s seethed that such families also “make, construe and execute the laws.”¹²⁰ Likewise, a majority of the trustees during Low’s early years on the board not only held Columbia diplomas but also descended from New York’s corporate elite. Low’s colleagues included William Colford Schermerhorn—an affluent attorney descended from city founders and dedicated to the exclusive Metropolitan and Knickerbocker Clubs—and Hamilton Fish, whose wealth matched that of the Astors.¹²¹ This population of administrators increasingly alienated the student body across the late 1880s; students channeled cynicism into op-eds, demanding that these “conservative fossils” would “get a move on,” read their petitions, and deliver on a promised gymnasium.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Untitled article, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, February 21, 1889, 116.

¹¹⁷ During our interview, Columbia University President Emeritus George Rupp shared that, as of the time of his own administration (1993-2002), the Columbia University Trustees did not receive formal instruction on the history of the Columbia presidency or board. George E. Rupp. Telephone interview by Emily Gruber. November 9, 2018.

¹¹⁸ Seth Low to F. B. Jennings, October 4, 1911, Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1879-1930. RBML.

¹¹⁹ Christopher Grey, “New York in 1882,” Unidentified newspaper, 1982, 57. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1879-1930. RBML.

¹²⁰ “Individual and Corporate Wealth,” *The Washington Post*, February 17, 1881, 2.

¹²¹ “W.C. Schermerhorn Dead,” *New York Times*, January 2, 1903, 1. “Politics and Finance,” *Boston Daily Globe*, October 18, 1880, 2.

¹²² Untitled article, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, February 21, 1889, 116.

These trustees constituted the “best men” that historian John Sproat identifies as a post-Civil War cohort of reformers that often restricted their platforms to calls for “moral rejuvenation.”¹²³ As young men turned to “railroading, high finance, and manufacturing” rather than politics, these “best men” became increasingly disinterested leaders, crossing party lines in the name of reform.¹²⁴ These “men of breeding and intelligence, of taste and substance” won votes to serve as Columbia trustees, administering the College.¹²⁵ Therefore, a brief glimpse into this boardroom confirms its likely contribution to Low’s education on the prevailing method of moralizing reform, which would serve as a pivotal point of contrast as he constructed his own reform-based agenda.

An 1882 *New York Times* article urged, “this is Columbia’s opportunity and many who wish well for our country are watching to see if the opportunity will be seized and improved.”¹²⁶ Barnard answered these expectations by changing the board’s structure and the significance of its work. The board voted on the Columbia presidency when vacancies arose. Candidates lobbied individual trustees for votes.¹²⁷ Barnard had expanded the president’s voice at meetings. “The first Columbia president since Samuel Johnson who saw himself as more than an extension of the trustees,” Barnard instituted annual presidential reports.¹²⁸ A staple “on the New York scientific-cultural-club” circuit, he brought Columbia to the city’s attention.¹²⁹

“Thank God, the University is born. Go ahead:” The School of Political Science¹³⁰

¹²³ John G. Sproat, “*The Best Men.*” *Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 9.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁶ “Editorial Article 2 – Untitled,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1882.

¹²⁷ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 151.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 151

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

One year prior to Low's board election, the trustees voted to establish a School of Political Science. Led by five professors, this new school introduced tenets of German and Parisian education to Columbia.¹³¹ The path to its final approval illustrates the moment of transition that Columbia experienced as Low returned as an administrator.

"Thank God, the University is born. Go ahead," wrote Samuel Ruggles upon receiving news of the vote that approved the School of Political Science.¹³² Ruggles had introduced John Burgess's vision for this new school at a board meeting in 1880.¹³³ Columbia had hired thirty-two-year-old political scientist and Civil War veteran John Burgess (1844-1931) from Amherst College in 1876. Recalling his first encounter with Ruggles, Burgess noted, "from the first moment of our meeting we flew together like steel and magnet."¹³⁴ Burgess accepted Ruggles's request that "you must come to Columbia," and moved south to succeed Francis Lieber as Professor of History.¹³⁵ Having taught history and political science at Amherst through the 1870s, Burgess had grown tired of Amherst's faculty who "regarded the college as a place for discipline, not as a place for research."¹³⁶

Burgess introduced a new approach to pedagogy at Columbia.¹³⁷ In the 1880s, Americans interested in graduate studies in political science set out for schools in Berlin.¹³⁸ Unlike the

¹³¹ For a discussion of the U.S.-Europe exchange on progressive reform in the twentieth century, see Rodgers. Frederick Paul Keppel, *Columbia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), 19.

¹³² Although a graduate of Yale College, Samuel Ruggles L.L. D. crucially pushed Columbia College to embrace the scaffolding of a research university by supporting Burgess's design. He also modeled engagements with both the College and the city as he served on the New-York Chamber of Commerce among other engagements. McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 151. "An Old New-Yorker Gone: The Busy Life of Samuel B. Ruggles Brought to a Close," *New York Times*, August 29, 1881, 8.

¹³³ John W. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar: The Beginnings of Columbia University* (New York: AMS Press, Inc. 1934), 191.

¹³⁴ Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 151.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 46. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 147-148.

¹³⁷ Keppel, *Columbia*, 19.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

costly Christian social economics programs housed at Oxford and the highly-specialized studies in France, Germany offered “open, public institutions.”¹³⁹ Burgess counted himself among the scholars of American government who closely tracked the Hayes administration’s U.S. Civil Service reforms.¹⁴⁰ He traveled to Berlin to gain hands-on insight into the increasingly admired German pedagogical techniques.¹⁴¹ A letter from former Amherst College and Columbia Law School student Clifford Russ Bateman alerted Burgess to the *École des Sciences Politiques* in Paris.¹⁴² Impressed by this school’s model, Burgess wrote to Barnard, advocating that “a decisive step forward in the development of the political sciences is positively and specially demanded” at Columbia.¹⁴³

Upon reading Burgess’s proposal, Barnard strategized the language with which he would present the topic to the trustees. He decided to present this recommended School of Political Science as a hub for “preparing young men to engage intelligently in the service of government.”¹⁴⁴ Barnard also amended Burgess’s request for the creation of a new “department” for the suggestion of a new “school.”¹⁴⁵

Burgess persisted in his negotiations with skeptical trustees, penning an appeal to Chairman Hamilton Fish that argued, “the question before you next Monday is simply whether

¹³⁹ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 85.

¹⁴⁰ “A phrase which the Hayes men here and elsewhere are just now rolling like a sweet morsel under their tongue,” civil service reform received broad press coverage during Rutherford B. Hayes’s presidency (1877-1881). Pushing back on the spoils system, Hayes committed to recruiting the most-deserving candidates for government offices. Keppel, *Columbia*, 11. “‘Civil Service Reform:’ The Great Things Hayes Has Promised But, Not Performed,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 24, 1877, 3. Edward O. Frantz, ed., *A Companion to the Reconstruction Presidents: 1865-1888*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

¹⁴¹ Horace Coon, *Columbia: Colossus on the Hudson* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1947), 84

¹⁴² R. Gordon Hoxie, ed. *A History of the Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 11.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

you will advance our College into the *first* rank or let it drop into the third.”¹⁴⁶ Although reports claim that this letter did not reach Fish until after the relevant board meeting, the proposal survived postponed decisions, Fish’s resignation, and trustee politics.¹⁴⁷ With such grit, Burgess established the first School of Political Science in the United States.¹⁴⁸

Burgess first conceived the School of Political Science as a hub for graduate study, as an addition to the School of Law’s program.¹⁴⁹ Barnard extended Burgess’s suggestion that undergraduate seniors receive the opportunity to participate in the School of Political Science’s first year coursework as an elective. He proposed that Columbia confer a Bachelor of Philosophy—rather than the contemplated Bachelor of Arts—degree to seniors who mastered the first-year curriculum.¹⁵⁰ Barnard, however, did not approve Burgess’s request to ratify a Doctor of Civil Laws degree for law students who completed the curriculum.¹⁵¹ By 1884, approximately half of undergraduate seniors partook of the opportunity to enroll in the School of Political Science electives.¹⁵²

Burgess initially succeeded in recruiting students from only Amherst.¹⁵³ However, he developed the curriculum and networked with the trustees to ultimately raise attendance at the

¹⁴⁶ Hoxie, *A History of the Faculty of Political Science*, 16.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-19.

¹⁴⁸ Although Burgess’s School of Political Science marked a turning point in increasing awareness of and interest in the study of political science at Columbia, it is important to note that such work was already underway among Columbia affiliates. For example, T. W. Dwight, Dean of Columbia Law School, collaborated with ex-President of Yale Woolsey and Professors Langdell and Thayer of Harvard to “consider the state of the science of jurisprudence in the United States, and to take proper action for enlarging the opportunities for instruction in that science in the universities of the country.” They pursued this work with the backing of the American Social Science Association. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science*, 221.

¹⁴⁹ President Theodore Roosevelt would enroll in the School of Political Science’s courses during his Columbia Law School career. Hoxie, *A History of the Faculty of Political Science*, 12. Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 50.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² “About the College,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, November 26, 1884.

¹⁵³ Keppel, *Columbia*, 19.

School of Political Science to over two thousand students.¹⁵⁴ By acknowledging the growing realization that “there is no substantial reason why we should not have in New York City a really great university,” the *New York Times* suggested that the School of Political Science advanced New York’s ability to compete with Europe, where prominent universities “are situated in the chief centres of social and political life.”¹⁵⁵ While Burgess recommended that Columbia graduate Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman (1861-1929) attend the universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, the Sorbonne, and the École libre des sciences politique in the 1870s, political economist Seligman chose Columbia for his Ph.D. in 1885.¹⁵⁶ Burgess presided over the School of Political Science’s development until his 1909 retirement.¹⁵⁷

“Columbia seems to be gradually awakening to the consciousness of her possibilities”¹⁵⁸

Although the birth of the School of Political Science preceded his first board meeting, Low regularly promoted Burgess’s brainchild, even while remaining alert to remaining in the good favor of the boardroom’s corporate elite.¹⁵⁹ Low helped shape the School of Political Science through his election to both the Committee on the School of Political Science and the Finance Committee.¹⁶⁰ In 1882, the trustees resolved to increase the School of Political Science’s funding by two hundred dollars to recruit students.¹⁶¹ This commitment to defending the study of

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ “Editorial Article 2 - No Title,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1882.

¹⁵⁶ Bender, *Intellect and Public Life*, 55.

¹⁵⁷ With a taste for reform, Barnard pushed the passage of additional proposals for new fields of study during Low’s early years on the Board of Trustees. For example, he wrote to Reverend Morgan Dix in July 1885 to explain Professor Alexander’s proposal for efforts to increase pedagogy on Logic, Ethics, and Philosophy. Reminiscent of Burgess’s own persuasion techniques when advocating for the School of Political Science, Barnard attempted to stoke Dix’s anxiety about Columbia’s ranking. He noted, “these are subjects as to which our principally competing colleges are not only already better provided than we, but as to which they are making most energetic efforts to increase their attractiveness.” In this letter, Barnard also suggested that Nicholas Murray Butler (whose Columbia presidency dated 1902-1945) proved himself “an indubitable genius” who could help spearhead this potential new discipline. Frederick A.P. Barnard to Morgan Dix, July 11, 1885. MS #0073, Box 4 (Correspondence). Frederick A. P. Barnard Papers, 1831-1889. RBML.

¹⁵⁸ “Editorial Article 2 – Untitled,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1882.

¹⁵⁹ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” November 7, 1881. RBML.

¹⁶⁰ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” January 5, 1885. RBML.

¹⁶¹ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” June 6, 1881. RBML.

political economy, comparative constitutional law, and statistics in Columbia classrooms announced the Brooklyn politico's burgeoning interest in merging the study and practice of municipal governance. Stipulating that Low "was not, in the first place, a profound scholar," Burgess commended his trustee record, emphasizing:

Happily, in the decade between 1880 and 1890, the Board of Trustees had received some very important and valuable additions to its membership, in the place of old conservative standpatters, deceased or resigned. Among these new members were George L. Rives, Charles M. Da Costa...and Seth Low.¹⁶²

Burgess thereby aligned Low with the wealthy "best men" model of New York leadership.

Despite Low's Finance Committee seat, the School of Political Science stagnated financially. Between 1883 and 1884, the annual expenditures allocated to the School of Political Science remained \$150.¹⁶³ Although this sum exceeded the \$100 directed to the Classics Department, it trailed the \$700 granted to the Physics Department and \$200 for the Chemistry Department.¹⁶⁴ The school received similar treatment in salary allocations. Low attended the board meeting that outlined total salaries per school.¹⁶⁵ While Columbia earmarked \$89,824 for the School of Arts, \$31,300 for the School of Law, and \$68,736 for the School of Mines, the School of Political Science received only \$17,643.¹⁶⁶ The trustees' consideration of requests from the School of Political Science did not guarantee financial concessions. Low and his colleagues stipulated that, while they would respond to the complaint about professors' titles,

¹⁶² The New Yorkers behind these names are significant. A yacht club member, Rives graduated from Columbia College (second in his class), the University of Cambridge, and Columbia Law School, after which he served as a trustee of the New-York Public Library and Columbia University; Rives also served as a director of the Mercantile Trust Company, Columbia Alumni Association, and Head of the Charter Revision Commission drawn up by then-Mayor Low. Charles M. Da Costa dedicated his library and \$100,000 to the establishment of Columbia professorships in his will. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 235, 224. "Appointment of Rives," *New-York Tribune*, November 16, 1901, 1. "A Big Gift to Columbia," *New-York Tribune*, July 1, 1890, 10.

¹⁶³ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," April 7, 1884. RBML.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," November 2, 1885. RBML.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

they would not add salary bonuses.¹⁶⁷ These setbacks raise questions about Low's balance of securing his approval from the Columbia trustees and forwarding his interest in political science.

With 1,500 signatures, an 1883 petition for coeducation confronted the board and tested Low's priorities.¹⁶⁸ Low again chose not to challenge the trustees. He joined the all-male board in a unanimous decision to preserve Columbia's policy of a male-only undergraduate student body. Their rationale claimed a commitment to conserving traditions upheld since the institution's 1754 founding.¹⁶⁹ This decision clarified that, although Columbia supported the creation of a School of Political Science, it did not align with the American Social Science Association's inclusion of women and election of female leadership.¹⁷⁰

A Brooklyn Return Address

Low's name frequently remains absent from the board's roll call between 1881 and 1888.¹⁷¹ Upon receiving the trustee title, Low stipulated that he would resign if he could not simultaneously excel on the board and in the Brooklyn Mayor's Office that he entered just weeks before his trustee appointment.¹⁷² His correspondence with Columbia officials during this period frequently featured a Brooklyn return address, confirming his determination to balance both duties and, likely, to gain hands-on understanding of the governing strategies of New York's corporate elite as he planned literal and figurative passageways for corporate liberalism in Brooklyn.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," January 3, 1887. RBML.

¹⁶⁸ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," March 5, 1883. RBML.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ "New Officers Elected: Closing Session of the American Social Science Association," *The Washington Post*, April 27, 1902, 6.

¹⁷¹ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," March 5, 1883. RBML.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Seth Low to Columbia Committee on Honors, December 3, 1888. Box 62. Series II: Columbia College Papers, 1703-1964. RBML.

**Chapter III: “A fair and beautiful chapter in Brooklyn’s history:”¹⁷⁴
Seth Low as Brooklyn Mayor (1881-1885)**

Between 1880 and 1890, Brooklyn’s population rose from approximately 500,000 to over 800,000.¹⁷⁵ On Election Day, this population grew. The shortage of voter registration laws meant that “graveyards voted,” locking the Democrats in to victory.¹⁷⁶ Brooklyn Republicans saw thirty-two-year-old Seth Low as their chance to terminate this cycle. And the 1881 mayoral race lay open for a win.

Low had gained visibility through his establishment of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities and his leadership of the Young Republicans. Therefore, he received a request to chair a delegation to remove both existing Republican mayoral candidates from the 1881 ballot.¹⁷⁷ Republicans stipulated, however, that Low must agree to run for mayor as the “compromise candidate.”¹⁷⁸ Although Low initially rejected the proposal, Republican candidate Ripley Ropes’s withdrawal promised a united Republican ticket and convinced Low to join the race.¹⁷⁹

Brooklyn had set high stakes for the mayor who would assume office in 1881. The city received a new charter in 1880, and, for the first time, the mayor would name all but two city department heads.¹⁸⁰ Warnings about the next mayor’s power stoked a combination of fear and interest that engaged Brooklyn’s population in the campaign.

¹⁷⁴ Walter Livingston, “Columbia’s New President,” *The University*, October 1889.

¹⁷⁵ L. E. Fredman, “Seth Low: Theorist of Municipal Reform,” *Journal of American Studies* 6, no. 1 (April 1972): 25.

¹⁷⁶ Low, *Seth Low*, 46.

¹⁷⁷ Harold C. Syrett, *The City of Brooklyn, 1865-1898: A Political History* (New York: AMS Press, 1944), 102.

¹⁷⁸ Fredman, “Seth Low: Theorist of Municipal Reform,” 27.

¹⁷⁹ “General Politics: Brooklyn Republicans United,” *New-York Tribune*, October 26, 1881.

¹⁸⁰ “Mr. Seth Low and the Mayoralty: His Declination Regretted by the Better Elements of Both Parties - Some Hints to the Republican Managers - Why the Schemers Feel Relieved - Well Known Citizens Paying Their Arrears - The Mayor of Chicago in Brooklyn Etc.,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 30, 1881.

This structural change offered an opportunity for Low to further revise governance in Brooklyn. Low pledged “to administer the affairs of the city upon strict business principles.”¹⁸¹ To be sure, Low did not equate these “business principles” with those of the “best men” who populated Columbia’s board. Instead, during his two terms as Brooklyn’s mayor (1881-1885), Low began to shift away from the narrow class interests of the New York business elite that dominated politics and toward corporate liberalism. He pushed an agenda that increased the efficiency and equality of Brooklyn’s economic and educational opportunities. We begin at the corner of Flatbush and Fulton Avenues.¹⁸²

“I may thoroughly claim in your midst tonight to be a man of the people”¹⁸³

A “curious spectacle” occurred in November 1881.¹⁸⁴ Approximately one-thousand Democrats rushed the Music Hall—located at the intersection of Flatbush and Fulton Avenues—the headquarters of a mayoral election convention.¹⁸⁵ Attendees fired opinions about the campaign and its characters. Each reference to Low provoked an uproar of cheering while mentions of opponents James Howell and Civil War General Henry W. Slocum stirred “frequent prolonged hisses.”¹⁸⁶

Low disproved campaign critics who sought to pigeonhole him as a son of privilege who knew only “silk stockings and kid gloves” and “seldom left the First Ward.”¹⁸⁷ Instead, he confirmed that the business man’s efficiency that he claimed to bring to the Brooklyn Mayor’s

¹⁸¹ “Kings County Politics: Mr. Seth Low Accepts the Mayoralty Nomination,” *New York Times*, October 30, 1881.

¹⁸² This thesis introduces Low’s campaign strategies in both 1881 and 1883 before discussing his two terms in office. This organization seeks to facilitate an understanding of the cross-fertilization between his Brooklyn Mayor’s Office strategies and those of his upcoming two administrations.

¹⁸³ This quotation from Seth Low’s closing campaign speech captures the tenor of his platform. Seth Low, “Closing Speech” (speech, Academy of Music, November 5, 1881).

¹⁸⁴ “The Brooklyn Mayoralty; Seth Low endorsed by the independent democrats,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1881.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Seth Low, “Closing Speech” (speech, Academy of Music, November 5, 1881).

Office was, in historian L.E. Fredman's words, "simply the antonym of spoils."¹⁸⁸ Low applied the work ethic that distinguished him as Columbia's valedictorian to a plan to visit all demographic nooks in Brooklyn.¹⁸⁹ He met with the Citizens' Committee, the Campaign Committee, and the Young Republican Club.¹⁹⁰ He spoke to the Eastern and Western Districts' manufacturers. He "shook hands with everyone, and had a pleasant word for all."¹⁹¹ Low thereby applied a corporate liberal vision to his mayoral campaign, breaking with an earlier environment in which "commercial and industrial interests had enjoyed an informal control of American politics."¹⁹² Additionally, Low obtained support from both Republicans and Independent Democrats. This record of promoting a "non-partisan government founded on business principles" resonated when he encouraged Columbia to educate on public service from a nonpartisan standpoint.¹⁹³

The press attributed Low's campaign success to this canvas strategy. 4,497 votes determined the election, costing Mayor Howell a third term.¹⁹⁴ With a total 45,434 votes, Low secured the mayoralty.¹⁹⁵ Low pledged to govern Brooklyn "with an eye single to the best interests alike of the poor and the rich, the high and the low, friends and foes," evoking corporate liberalism's call to defend citizens against the gluttony of elite business interests.¹⁹⁶

The office that "sought him—not he the office"¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁸ Fredman, "Seth Low: Theorist of Municipal Reform," 35.

¹⁸⁹ "Seth Low: Closing Scenes of his Mayoralty Campaign: Meeting in the Academy of Music Last Night. Hon S.B. Chittenden and Stewart L. Woodford Present the Business and Poetical Aspects of the Canvas - The Humerous Side Also Illustrated - Mr. Low's Closing Speech," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 6, 1881.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. "The Republican Campaign - The Leaders Concentrating Their Strength on Seth Low - The Fight Warming Up - A Hitch at Headquarters - Confidence Expressed in the Result," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 2, 1881.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, 3.

¹⁹³ "King's County Redeemed; How the election of Seth Low is regarded," *New York Times*, November 9, 1881.

¹⁹⁴ "The Election Returns: The Figures Corrected at Police Headquarters," Unidentified Newspaper, 1881, 52. Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 1-3, Mayoral Campaign 1881. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ "Kings County Politics: Mr. Seth Low Accepts the Mayoralty Nomination," *New York Times*, October 30, 1881.

¹⁹⁷ "Mayor Low's Excellent Record," *New-York Tribune*, April 15, 1883, 6.

Low launched an 1883 re-election campaign that built upon the corporate liberal vision that seated him in the post. While Low's first mayoral triumph preceded his election to the Columbia board, his re-election campaign benefited from his experience navigating the corporate elite viewpoints of his fellow trustees. Additionally, Low's board position integrated him in questions regarding education, an arena pivotal to his Brooklyn agenda. Low's camp warned Brooklyn, "the non-registered citizen is a political corpse."¹⁹⁸

Although Low decided not to challenge the Columbia trustees on their opposition to coeducation in 1883, his Brooklyn reelection campaign in the same year reflected his respect for women's abilities to forward progressive reform. Low came of age in a period that viewed women as central to the social science movement on not only a national but also a state level. For example, in 1880, seven women established the New-York Women's Social Association.¹⁹⁹ Precisely because Sproat's "best men" "recoiled from the disagreeable activities of a political system that became more complex and seemingly more unmanageable every year" did women become central to the social science reform project as Low entered the field.²⁰⁰

Low recognized that women's disenfranchisement did not disqualify them as critical actors in his mayoral campaign. While newspapers ran stories about the surprising number of women present at Low's campaign gatherings, his 1883 campaign pamphlets directly addressed women. Documents circulated throughout the city, calling, "Register Your Man Next Monday!"²⁰¹ Despite Low's appreciation of women's sway in politics, in 1884, the *Brooklyn*

¹⁹⁸ Flyer urging Brooklyn to vote, October 1883. Ms Coll Low, Scrapbook 3: 1883 Re-Election Campaign. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

¹⁹⁹ "Discussing Social Science Topics," *New-York Tribune*, January 27, 1881.

²⁰⁰ Sproat, "The Best Men," 47.

²⁰¹ Flyer urging women to register their husbands to vote, Monday October 22, 1883. Ms Coll Low Scrapbook 3: 1883 Re-Election Campaign. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

Daily Eagle employment columns remained divided by gender, with the female options limited to, “WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK.”²⁰²

Campaign literature convinced diverse constituents that the heir to the prominent A.A. Low & Brothers sought to understand their needs. Low specifically targeted Brooklyn’s immigrant communities. Leaflets written in Italian circulated, and two-hundred and fifty German residents convened to decide on supporting Low’s ticket.²⁰³ Pamphlets’ rhetoric echoed such inclusivity. A voter registration flyer italicized “*everyone*,” urging all to raise their voices through their votes.²⁰⁴ At the Brooklyn Ring one week before Election Day, prominent abolitionist and clergyman Henry Ward Beecher recognized Low, the preparatory school boy who holidayed in Newport, as “the poor man’s friend.”²⁰⁵

The centrality of non-partisanship to this 1883 campaign suggests inspiration from Low’s concurrent participation as a Columbia trustee. Low arrived as this governing body fractured into rival camps: the University Party and the College Faction.²⁰⁶ Burgess led one-third of the faculty behind the University Party, which gained Barnard’s support by advocating for the integration of the German model of pedagogy to convert Columbia into a university, a goal resisted by the College Faction.²⁰⁷ Low’s consideration of party systems in a Columbia context even predated his trustee membership. He had informed the Alumni Association that issues of civic government should materialize in the college classroom “from the standpoint of theory and principle, as well as from the less disinterested positions of active political life” rather than partisanship.²⁰⁸

²⁰² “Wanted—Help—Females,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 8, 1884, 3.

²⁰³ “Germans Favoring Seth Low,” *New-York Tribune*, October 14, 1883.

²⁰⁴ Scrapbook 3: 1883 Mayoral Campaign. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²⁰⁵ “Sustaining Mayor Low: A Monster Mass Meeting in the Brooklyn Rink,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1883, 2.

²⁰⁶ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 52.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Acta Columbiana*, April 1875, 101. RBML.

Likewise, Low downplayed party affiliation in his 1883 reelection campaign, casting his campaign as a “citizen’s administration.”²⁰⁹ Ex-District Attorney Thomas Rodman stood up for Democrats at a campaign meeting, acknowledging that Low’s pledge to govern Brooklyn without partisan biases secured his vote in 1881 and would do so again in 1883.²¹⁰ Low’s opponent, the journalist Joseph Hendrix, attempted to spin this non-partisan stance as an indicator of weakness.²¹¹ However, both Democrats and Republicans took to the polls on Election Day, securing Low’s 13,000 votes to Hendrix’s 9,600.²¹²

“A rainbow of hope to every misgoverned municipality from Maine to California”²¹³

Seth Low constructed a mayoral agenda that honed his skills in positioning boards and budgets to connect the study and practice of municipal governance.²¹⁴ He answered the new Brooklyn Charter’s call to appoint city department heads.²¹⁵ By selecting what he termed his “cabinet,” Low encountered an early example of the variations between managing cities and Columbia. Low’s administration acknowledged that it borrowed strategy from federal government legislation. In 1882, the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act passed in the United States Senate.²¹⁶ This legislation divorced politics from hiring practices, reserving employment for those “whose fitness to discharge the duties of the position

²⁰⁹ “Mayor Low Again Called: His Course To Be Approved By a Second Nomination. Citizens of Both Parties Asking Him to Be Their Candidate - He Accepts Upon the Same Terms As Before,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1883.

²¹⁰ “Seth Low Re-nominated: Citizens Irrespective of Party Support Him. He Accepts The Nomination For the Mayoralty of Brooklyn and Talks on Local Topics,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1883.

²¹¹ “Supporting Mr. Hendrix: Brooklyn Democrats Full of Enthusiasm. Mr. William C. De Witt Makes a Sharp Criticism of Mayor Low’s Administration - The Candidate’s Views,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1883.

²¹² The newspapers do not report exact numbers. There seems to have been difficulty calculating the results. The statistics included in this sentence were the approximations published by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. “Today’s Contests in the Various Election Districts,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 6, 1883, 5.

²¹³ Untitled Article, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 13, 1883. Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 3: Mayoral Campaign, Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²¹⁴ Low’s official Brooklyn mayoral paper collection appears to be missing or destroyed. This section consequently considers Low’s mayoralty according to his leading initiatives rather than chronology.

²¹⁵ Low, *Seth Low*, 49.

²¹⁶ “Civil Service Reform: A Bill Passed by the Senate. The Pendleton Bill as Amended and Finally Adopted,” *New-York Tribune*, December 28, 1882.

shall have been ascertained by open, fair, impartial, competitive examination.”²¹⁷ It also approved the president’s appointment of a five-person commission to orchestrate this process.²¹⁸

Likewise, by 1883, Low supported the Committee on Municipal Affairs’ bill to “improve the subordinate civil service of Brooklyn.”²¹⁹ “Demanding a system of appointments and promotions through open and competitive examination,” this legislation codified Low’s cabinet choices. This shift from politics founded on favors intrigued journalists who reported that Low followed through and “filled all the principal offices with men of character and fitness.”²²⁰ Low brought business strategy to this operation, instituting weekly meetings with this cabinet. This record of favoring civil service reforms that matched those born in the United States Senate aligned Low with the mindset of a corporate liberal who “feared intense class conflict.”²²¹

This concern resurfaced as Low responded to the Brooklyn Bridge’s \$15 million construction (1869-1883).²²² He insisted, “it is fundamental that [the bridge] shall be open to the use of cars from every direction upon equal terms.”²²³ During meetings of the project’s trustees, Low sought to dismantle divisions between these elite insiders and the populations of Brooklyn and New York City. Defending his constituents, Low demanded that they “were entitled to know” updates about funding requests and timelines reported by the engineers.²²⁴ He requested

²¹⁷ “Civil Service Reform: The Pendleton and Kasson Bills Compared,” *The Sun*, December 16, 1882, 6.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ “Brooklyn Civil Service: The Reform Association’s Bill for a Local Civil Service commission,” *New York Times*, February 16, 1883.

²²⁰ Untitled Article, *New York World*, September 2, 1897.

²²¹ Block, “Beyond Corporate Liberalism,” 352.

²²² G. S. Prentzas, *The Brooklyn Bridge* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 8. Brooklyn City Treasurer, “Cost of the N.Y. and Brooklyn Bridge to the City,” October 24, 1883. Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 1-3: Mayroal Campaign 1883. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²²³ Seth Low, “Speech on Rapid Transit at a Citizens’ Meeting” (speech, Academy of Music, October 6, 1883) in Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 2. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²²⁴ “The Brooklyn Bridge: Report of the Chief Engineer—Mayor Low Wants Light,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1882, 3.

that the engineers, “as in his own business,” distribute weekly reports to the mayors to facilitate his ability to increase transparency with constituents.²²⁵

Despite directing his gaze to the federal front on civil service, meeting the New York City mayor about the Brooklyn Bridge, and participating in the Greater New York Senate’s Finance, Railroads, Public Health and Agriculture Committees, Low crusaded for “local self-government”—“home rule”—in Brooklyn.²²⁶ In 1882, he requested increased control over Brooklyn’s governance, without Albany’s interference. Low invoked Brooklyn’s recent charter, which he interpreted as a protection against the state’s liberty to set up commissions and delay decisions on issues and requests submitted by Brooklyn’s mayor.²²⁷

Low’s budget and taxation plans articulated this administrative ideology fiscally. In 1882, Low urged Tax Collector James Learned to allocate salaries that matched “faithful service to the city” and to remember that “no amount of contributions for party purposes will avail them.”²²⁸ Low viewed financial organization as a means by which to reiterate solidarity with Brooklyn’s employees—rather than with the business elite. Tabulated reports of the city’s tax budget noted that the \$84,208,808.95 total in 1882 rose to \$85,179,549.90 in 1883. However, journalists defended this increase when Democratic rivals sought to intercept Low’s 1883 reelection. The *New-York Tribune* exonerated Low by explaining, “in proportion to the present size of the city the expenditures and tax rate under Mayor Low are less than at any time in the last ten years.”²²⁹ The article catalogued the services including police and fire forces and street cleaning that

²²⁵ “The Brooklyn Bridge Trustees,” *New-York Tribune*, July 11, 1882, 2.

²²⁶ State of New York, “No. 14 Senate,” January 14, 1885. Ms Coll Low. Box 155. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML. “The Advice of Mayor Low: The Duties of All Citizens Who Love Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1882, 1.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Keating, “Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University,” 30-31.

²²⁹ “Mayor Low’s Good Record: Why Taxes in Brooklyn are Higher. The Mayor Not Responsible—An Economical and Efficient Administration,” *New-York Tribune*, October 27, 1883, 2.

benefited from this increase.²³⁰ When similar suspicion of Low's responsibility for rise in tax rates from \$2.60 in 1884 to \$2.70 in 1885 percolated, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* maintained that it "was not only expected but also impossible to be avoided without seriously crippling the growth of the city." By 1883, Low had slashed \$700,000 of Brooklyn's debt.²³¹

Low's budget stimulated funds for a sphere of city governance that resonated with his simultaneous position as a Columbia trustee: education. Low had specified during his 1883 campaign that, if elected, he would address outcry about school building shortages, whereas "in one year of Mayor Schroeder's term and in one year of Mayor Howell's not one dollar went to building a school house."²³² The dollars that Seth Low directed to educating Brooklyn's youth dominate the archives and helped to dictate the science of administration that would follow him to Columbia and Greater New York City.

"An Educated Child Makes a Good Citizen!"²³³

This Columbia trustee improved the facilities, faculty, and funding for Brooklyn's public schools through his mayoralty. This priority suggests Low's determination to override potential claims that his resume—populated with the prestigious Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and Columbia College—disassociated him from the problems of his constituents. Therefore, this agenda item both forged links between the study and implementation of civic governance and indicated a shift toward an administration founded on corporate liberalism.

Seth Low presented two priorities to the Board of Education: to resolve the problems of inadequate accommodations for classrooms and of inexperienced faculty members.²³⁴

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ "Mayor Low's Message," *New-York Tribune*, January 9, 1883.

²³² "The Brooklyn Schools," *New-York Tribune*, November 25, 1883, 9.

²³³ "Education of our Children," 20. Ms Coll Low Scrapbook 3: Mayoral Campaign, 1883. Seth Low Papers 1870-1930. RBML.

²³⁴ Seth Low to the Board of Education in *Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Brooklyn for the Year 1882*. 14 Ed 9.16. Municipal Reference Library, New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

Brooklyn's Superintendent of Public Instruction had helped to stoke Low's alarm about the public schools with his notice that between five and ten-thousand more children would attend school if space allowed.²³⁵ The board echoed Low's concerns, citing the annual population increase of approximately 20,000 in Brooklyn as an added pressure on class sizes in schools.²³⁶

Low urged decreased class sizes and schoolhouse construction to ameliorate insufficient space for Brooklyn's students.²³⁷ He emphasized that these deficiencies resulted in students' receiving the equivalent of only a half day of schooling.²³⁸ In 1882, Low reminded the Board of Education that "this is not a time to replace poor buildings with better ones."²³⁹ Instead, he pressed the task force to channel \$250,000 to erecting new primary schools. While in 1880, appropriations for new school buildings in Brooklyn amounted to \$56,873, by 1883—the middle of Low's two mayoral terms—this allocation climbed to \$280,000.²⁴⁰

The mayor incentivized the Board of Education's action by creating competition, a strategy likely derived from his Columbia education. Low's classmates crammed Columbia's newspapers with opinionated pieces about academic prizes. This system of rewarding undergraduates appeared to double as a tactic to stimulate student engagement. Low took cues from these approaches, announcing that monetary prizes would accompany a competition for

²³⁵ Department of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the City of Brooklyn for the Year Ending in December 31, 1881*, 1882. Municipal Reference Library, 14 Ed. 71. Municipal Reference Library, New York, NY.

²³⁶ Department of Public Instruction to Seth Low, December 1, 1882. 14 Ed 9.61. Municipal Reference Library. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

²³⁹ Seth Low to the Board of Education, July 1882. 14 Ed 9.16. Municipal Reference Library, New York Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

²⁴⁰ "Education of our Children," 20. Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 3: Mayoral Campaign, 1883. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

the design of Brooklyn's new school buildings. By recruiting members of the Board of Education to judge the contestants, Low sought to increase the city's investment in his agenda.²⁴¹

By 1885, the Committee on High and Normal Schools confirmed its completion of Low's request to determine a plan for professionalizing Brooklyn's teachers. This committee resolved to open a two-year training school.²⁴² Reflecting Low's business-minded efficiency, the committee explained that this school would be situated two floors above a building of primary school classrooms.²⁴³ Low's commitment to such reforms revealed the reach of his goal of training a generation of experts, as he approved this plan to educate not only students but also instructors. As late as 1906, Low reaffirmed his respect for training, noting, "I do think that there is something to be learned about the art of teaching by anyone who has to teach."²⁴⁴

Given the fragmented records, the Board of Education's voice often emerges at the highest volume in the archives. However, Low himself took to Brooklyn's classrooms to contextualize his reforms. In his first mayoral term, Low voted to purchase \$75,000 of books for public school classrooms.²⁴⁵ He resisted the practice of storing up city funds for the future when Brooklyn's children could benefit in the moment.²⁴⁶ Low published his fieldwork in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. He circulated announcements including the update that he not only visited Primary School No. 14, but also mobilized the Department of Health to investigate classrooms' ventilation; he even reprinted the corresponding report in the paper.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ Seth Low to Board of Education, August 8, 1882. 14 Ed 9.16. Municipal Reference Library, New York Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

²⁴² *Report of the Committee on High and Normal Schools upon Organization of a Training School for teachers in connection with a Model Primary School*, April 14, 1885. Ms Coll Low. Box 163: Board of Education #3. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Seth Low, "Address and Welcome by The Honorable Seth Low" (speech, New York, April 25, 1906).

²⁴⁵ Seth Low to Board of Education, July 1882. 14 Ed 9.16. Municipal Reference Library, New York Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Seth Low, "A Communication from the Mayor," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 15, 1882.

In 1884, Low's second-to-last year in office, the Board of Education reported that three new schools would open in April and May alone; twenty-eight new classes had been established.²⁴⁸ James Naughton, the Board of Education's Superintendent of Buildings, announced that the school buildings met proper conditions and would improve further after the vacation months' cleaning.²⁴⁹ He anticipated that "there will be little to complain of in the sanitary line" by 1885.²⁵⁰ Enrollment in Brooklyn's grammar schools consequently increased by 645 students by Low's final year in office.²⁵¹ Average daily attendance rose from 9,056 to 10,429.²⁵² By 1884, Brooklyn saw a twenty-seven percent increase in the number of principals, department heads, and teachers engaged in the service of instructing the next generation.²⁵³

Graduation from grammar school in Seth Low's Brooklyn required the successful completion of ten examinations, one of which was "Civil Government."²⁵⁴ Although archival materials do not specify the mayor's involvement in curriculum choices, Low's curiosity about the intersections between the study and practice of public service persuade us of his support. After all, Low himself had not received a formal education in governance beyond the dactylic hexameter of Vergil's epic poetry for the Roman Emperor Augustus. To maximize his understanding of municipal governance, Low needed to experiment in a new arena—and Alma Mater called.

²⁴⁸ Department of Public Instruction, *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the City of Brooklyn for the Year Ending December 31st, 1884*, 4. 14 Ed. 9.61. Municipal Reference Library, New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

²⁴⁹ James W. Naughton, *Annual Report of James W. Naughton, Superintendent of Buildings of the Board of Education of the City of Brooklyn, NY*, May 6, 1884. Ms Coll Low. Box 163: "Board of Education 1." Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵¹ Department of Public Instruction, *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the City of Brooklyn for the Year Ending December 31st, 1884*, 5. 14 Ed. 9.61. Municipal Reference Library New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Examination for Graduation from Grammar School*, June 12, 1884. Ms Coll Low. Box 163: Board of Education #3. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930, RBML.

**Chapter IV: “The wisest thing your trustees could possibly have done:”²⁵⁵
Seth Low as Columbia University President (1890-1901)**

“This office gives to me, I think, the best platform in New York from which to discuss the social and political questions which have always interested me,” stated Seth Low.²⁵⁶ With these words, a thirty-nine-year-old Low returned from Europe to assume the Columbia presidency following Barnard’s passing.²⁵⁷ The heart of Low’s career settled in this administration, the veins of which ran deep through his experiences as an alumnus, a trustee, and a city mayor. *University* magazine credited his election to the widely-known recognition that “his habits of systematic study, and his love of books and learning, ended not with his collegiate course.”²⁵⁸

By reforming and financing Columbia College, Low transformed his Alma Mater into a research university. “All about him were lying the component parts of a University,” reported Columbia graduate Brander Matthews, “but they needed to be fitted together into a harmonious whole and endowed with a single spirit.”²⁵⁹ Therefore, Low aligned his administration with the objective to place “emphasis on cooperation and social responsibility,” one that would characterize corporate liberalism in the twentieth century.²⁶⁰ More specifically, a commitment to increasing the “usefulness” of Columbia—to its students and to its city—drove Low’s presidency, which he conceived as a “business organization.”²⁶¹ Extending Columbia’s

²⁵⁵ President C.K. Adams of Cornell issued this pronouncement in support of Low’s presidency. Kurland, *Seth Low*, 53.

²⁵⁶ Fredman, “Seth Low: Theorist of Municipal Reform,” 22.

²⁵⁷ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-” May 6, 1889, RBML.

²⁵⁸ Walter Livingston, “Columbia’s New President,” *The University*, October 1889, 4. Series I: Historical Biographical Files. Box 345. Columbia University Archives, RBML.

²⁵⁹ Brander Matthews graduated from Columbia College one year after Low’s graduation. He also graduated from Columbia Law School. Brander Matthews, *A History of Columbia University, 1754-1904* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904), 154.

²⁶⁰ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, xi.

²⁶¹ Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report,” October 1, 1900, 70 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-,” October 1, 1900, RBML.

metropolitan consciousness from ancient Rome and Carthage to the City of New York, Low trained a generation as experts on public service, demonstrating that university management could itself propel change in civic governance. Low called on students to ask themselves, “if I have this education, what can I hope to do for my day and generation?”²⁶²

A difference of only one vote placed Low in the presidency. The trustees chose between Low and Columbia Greek Professor and Acting President Henry Drisler, who had resisted Barnard’s modernization agenda.²⁶³ Along with the “progressive” reputation solidified since his early trustee years, Low fulfilled the requirement of Episcopalian faith and brought ties to influential New Yorkers, attributes that advanced his candidacy.²⁶⁴

The trustees allocated \$2,500 for a presidential inauguration at the Metropolitan Opera House.²⁶⁵ They shifted the inauguration from its original date of Tuesday, February 4 to Monday, February 3 because the former marked the U.S. Supreme Court’s centennial celebration. The board’s conviction that this anniversary would detract from attendance at Low’s inauguration suggests that the guest lists for a momentous Columbia occasion and a momentous American government occasion would overlap.

At the inauguration, Drisler spoke on behalf of the faculty before a gathering of both men and women, representing national and state government offices and other leading professions.²⁶⁶ Low set the tone for his administration with his inaugural address. Emphasizing Columbia’s location in New York City, Low argued, “there is no such thing as the world of letters apart from

²⁶² Seth Low, “College Education,” *The Youth’s Companion: An Illustrated Weekly Paper*, August 6, 1898. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

²⁶³ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 180.

²⁶⁴ Andrew S. Dolkart, *Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 109.

²⁶⁵ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” December 2, 188, RBML.

²⁶⁶ “Columbia College,” *Harper’s Weekly*, February 8, 1890, 111. Series I: Historical Biographical Files. Box 345. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

the world of men.”²⁶⁷ He thereby envisioned Columbia University’s centrality to transferring political power from the business elite to political science experts. And so, Seth Low set off to bridge these worlds.

“When I dream of Columbia and its possibilities...”²⁶⁸

Germany’s model of higher education offered a pedagogical template that Low looked to while converting Columbia College into a research university. Low’s record of intense study for each position mirrored the goals of late nineteenth century German universities. These institutions brought research to the humanities, rejecting its previous confinement to the natural sciences.²⁶⁹ Notably, historians credit “the favorable position of the United States with respect to Europe” as a catalyst for twentieth century corporate liberalism. Two decades earlier, Low had demonstrated effective cross-fertilization with Europe, as he borrowed educational tenets to train experts to reclaim politics.²⁷⁰

Low admired the emphasis on specialized study in European pedagogy. In an annual presidential report, he observed, “in England and Germany, they begin to specialize at nineteen and twenty, and they ought to do so here.”²⁷¹ Although Low’s personal papers remain missing, his presidential papers offer clues as to the texts that occupied his office shelves and shaped this mindset. “In the bookcase in my room, I think, a copy of the ‘Life of Lieber,’” wrote Low to an assistant, “I wish you would forward it to me here.”²⁷² Columbia had hired German political scientist and jurist Francis Lieber to head the history and political science departments in

²⁶⁷ Seth Low, “Inaugural Address” (speech, Metropolitan Opera House, February 1890), 51.

²⁶⁸ Seth Low, “A City University: Address” (speech, Johns Hopkins University, February 22, 1895) in Series I: Historical Biographical Files. UA #004. Box 345, Folder 1/ 8, “Low, Seth, President of Columbia University, 1889-1915. Columbia University Archives. New York, NY, RBML.

²⁶⁹ Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 104.

²⁷⁰ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, 253.

²⁷¹ Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report,” October 7, 1896 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-,” October 7, 1896, 11. RBML.

²⁷² Seth Low to Mr. Keppel, July 28, 1900. Series I: Central Files, Office of the President 1895-1971. Box 459, Folder 1-1-497, 1/ 5: “Low, Seth 10/1891-11/1901.” Columbia University Archives. RBML.

1857.²⁷³ Low's interest in this man, dubbed the first political scientist practicing in America, supports the hypothesis that he deemed an education in political science a pragmatic specialization that prepared Columbia students to govern after graduation.

However, Low stipulated, "the American problem is not the German problem."²⁷⁴ While explaining his administrative philosophy, he contrasted German educators' alliance with state government with the Columbia administration's detachment from New York state legislators.²⁷⁵ This is notable given Low's push for home rule without Albany's intrusion during his Brooklyn mayoralty, suggesting his perception of a difference between governing a city and governing a university. Contemporary university administrators consequently saw in Low's agenda an ambition to ally with the city, rather than the state. For example, Harvard's President Charles Eliot commended Low's program: "however much New York may do for the university, Columbia will do a hundredfold more for the city and the State through the multifarious services of her sons, taught there to discharge well their duties to society."²⁷⁶ Likewise, Low entered his administration with an eye on labor relations in this city. In 1889, he wrote to American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers to inform that "I am in sympathy with the desire of the working people for an 8-hour day."²⁷⁷ He stipulated, "my reasons, however, are sociological rather than directly economic," establishing foundations from which he would extend the language of labor rights to a university setting.²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 22.

²⁷⁴ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," 1896 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-" October 7, 1896, 11. RBML.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ "New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony," *New York Times*, May 3, 1896, 9.

²⁷⁷ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 244.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

As attempted in Brooklyn, transparency before his constituents topped Low's agenda. A former student editor of the predecessor to the *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Low permitted student journalists to publish excerpts from his annual reports to the trustees for the student body's review.²⁷⁹ Descriptions of the disciplines housed in each new building on the Morningside Heights campus dominated an article that summarized Low's updates on the construction progress. This emphasis suggests students' own increasing interest in specialization through higher education during the 1890s. These reforms spurred a steady increase in student enrollment at Columbia throughout Low's tenure. The student body rose from 1,573 during the 1891-1892 academic year to 2,452 during the 1900-1901 academic year.²⁸⁰

A "Cabinet" for Columbia

Low immediately invited the trustees to his home at 30 East 64th Street so that they might meet "the Faculties of the College, and those who are carrying forward the work of the College either as instructors or lecturers or in positions of trust."²⁸¹ This interest in engaging the trustees with the faculty is particularly striking given American newspapers' curiosity about the large number of teachers in German universities.²⁸² The University of Michigan reported that this initial faculty meeting at Low's residence constituted the first of its kind in twenty-five years.²⁸³

The creation of a University Council codified this system of layered governance based on a business model. Established by Low in 1890, the University Council aspired to quell

²⁷⁹ "President Low's Report," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 23, 1895.

²⁸⁰ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," October 7, 1895 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 7, 1895, 3. RBML. Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 1, 1900, 3. RBML.

²⁸¹ Seth Low to Gerard Beekman in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," January 6, 1890, 227. RBML.

²⁸² "Teachers in German Universities," *The Washington Post*, March 21, 1888, 4.

²⁸³ Stewart Edward White, "Seth Low," *The Inlander: A Monthly Magazine by the Students of Michigan University*, 1898, 183. Series I: Historical Biographical Files UA #004. Box 345. Box 1/8, "1889-1915, Low, Seth, President of Columbia University." Columbia University Archives. RBML.

“clashing” interests between Columbia’s schools.²⁸⁴ This mechanism for organizing discussion among divisions allowed Low to manage a university officer base that rose from 122 in 1890 to 385 by 1901.²⁸⁵ This initiative confirmed Low’s ability to procure, in the University Council’s words, “the full and unwavering confidence and cordial and zealous cooperation of all his colleagues—a power which can come only from an innate love of truth, joined with an open mind, a high sense of justice.”²⁸⁶

Low’s organization of governing body subsets within the university benefitted from his business education received at A.A. Low & Brothers in the 1870s. Therefore, while corporate liberalism’s roots often remain conceptualized as “social efficiency that grew up alongside industrial engineering and efficiency,” Low demonstrated that university governance offered an alternative origin for business efficiency.²⁸⁷ This framework reinforced the financial organization of his administration, changes to governance that Low approved as amendments to university statutes by his final years in office. In 1900, Low tasked the Bursar—under the Treasurer’s guidance—with assembling student fees, preserving paper payment vouchers, and maintaining transaction accounts.²⁸⁸ He also revised the responsibilities of the Registrar, who received duties directly from the president.²⁸⁹ The Registrar provided the Treasurer with forms for fee gathering and supported the administration’s efficiency as he would “keep such records as may be required for the proper compilation of student statistics.”²⁹⁰ Keen on buttressing his administrative

²⁸⁴ Untitled article, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 1, 1890.

²⁸⁵ University Council of Columbia University, “Minutes of the University Council,” October 12, 1901 in Keating, “Seth Low and the Development of Columbia University,” 267-8.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 268.

²⁸⁷ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, xiv.

²⁸⁸ The Board of Trustees’s minutes consistently capitalize “Registrar,” “Bursar,” and “Treasurer;” this thesis preserves this stylistic decision. “Amendments to the Statues” in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-,” June 4, 1900.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

networks, Low also hired an Assistant Bursar and an Assistant Registrar.²⁹¹ Low's administration modified the budget organization in place during his undergraduate years. During Low's own education, the Columbia trustees' reports do not consistently detail the budget, with finances surfacing instead in discussion of matters such as portrait commissioning.²⁹² During Low's presidency, categories broke down into "income (including donations)" and "expenditures;" the tabular statement was divided between "business administration" (salaries of university officers and "expenses of estate") and "educational administration."

Financial aid at Columbia echoed the draw of German higher education, which, in 1889, cost one third less than an academic year at Johns Hopkins, Harvard, or Cornell.²⁹³ The Committee on Aid for Students reported to the trustees that during the 1896-1897 academic year, "fifty-one students were enabled to earn about \$3,750; or, upon the average, about one-half of their tuition fee."²⁹⁴ These efforts helped break down Columbia's country club lacquer, offering solution for Seth Low whom Weinstein noted, "abhorred the idea of 'class politics.'"²⁹⁵ "This form of helping students is, in my judgment, one of the best that can be devised," announced Seth Low.²⁹⁶

"The only word of interest in the whole service was the final 'Amen'"²⁹⁷

Low's presidential agenda drew inspiration not only from his mayoralty but also from his Columbia education. For example, Low immediately encouraged the trustees to reconsider the mandatory daily chapel attendance that he experienced as a student. In 1891, chapel service

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," November 7, 1868. RBML.

²⁹³ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 85.

²⁹⁴ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," October 4, 1897, 25 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 4, 1897.

²⁹⁵ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, 23.

²⁹⁶ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," October 4, 1897, 26 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 4, 1897.

²⁹⁷ Untitled article, *Columbia Daily Spectator*, February 1891.

attendance became voluntary and, in the same month, the Columbia chaplain resigned.²⁹⁸ This revision to religious life at Columbia suggested Low's mission to act upon German universities' warning that the brightest American minds would no longer devote their careers to theology.²⁹⁹ This perspective gained attention, as it did not dominate all circles of American higher education. *The University* magazine, for example, ran an article that insisted that a college chaplain receive a salary "only second to that of the president."³⁰⁰

Low received recognition for his engagement of New York's Jewish population—which increased by 1.4 million people between 1880 and 1914—in his project to unite the study and practice of governance.³⁰¹ Low graduated from Columbia alongside Felix Adler, a Jewish member of the Class of 1870 who prominently protested Saturday exams and sparked conversations about religious observance at Columbia.³⁰² It is compelling that this exposure as an undergraduate helped to shape Low's interest in introducing a cosmopolitan understanding of the city and its religious diversity to Columbia as an administrator.

Early in his presidency, Low received a letter from Oscar Straus—a Jewish alumnus of Columbia—reporting on the "entirely reputable" status of the Jewish Theological Seminary, founded in 1886.³⁰³ This message raises questions about the intent of the inquiry to which Straus here responded, as Low navigated likely antisemitism from the board. Although Low's opponents attempted to plant stories of his antisemitism, the *American Hebrew* countered with

²⁹⁸ Cornelius R. Duffie had served in this position since Low's undergraduate years. Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," December 1, 1890, 412. RBML.

²⁹⁹ Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 106.

³⁰⁰ "What a College Chaplain Should Do," *The University*, October 1889, 10. Box 345. Series I: Historical Biographical Files. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

³⁰¹ Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 679.

³⁰² McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 257.

³⁰³ The Joint Degree program between the Jewish Theological Seminary and Columbia's School of General Studies was not founded until 1954. Oscar S. Straus to Seth Low, October 5, 1891. Box 459. Folder 1-1-497, 1/5: Low, Seth, 10/1891-11/1901. Series I: Central Files, Office of the President, 1895-1971. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

quotations from Jewish New Yorkers. Responding to a request for a comment as “a duty as well as a pleasure,” Isaac N. Seligman, brother of the esteemed Columbia Professor of Political History E.R.A. Seligman, clarified, “I can unequivocally stamp these anti-Semitic reports as unfounded.”³⁰⁴ Jacob H. Schiff extended this defense, noting that, “quite frequently it has happened that I have gone to Mr. Low for advice how to combat prejudice and other unfair actions against members of our race.”³⁰⁵

Likewise, in 1892, Low welcomed Jewish Theological Seminary students to use Columbia’s library.³⁰⁶ Low’s support of Jewish observance prevailed through his final year in office, when he requested data on the dates of Jewish holidays for the upcoming years to ensure that “hereafter it would be unnecessary for Jewish pupils to ask for special examinations.”³⁰⁷ In addition to hiring four Jewish faculty members, he advocated for Jewish Theological Seminary students to receive the same benefit of complimentary Columbia tuition granted to students of the Union and General Theological Seminaries.³⁰⁸

This defense of New York’s Jewish blocs ultimately cost Low the favor of the board, Burgess, and his successor, Nicholas Murray Butler. This next Columbia president inaugurated a new campus chapel, which he specified welcomed all Christian denominations. Although Low asked if Jewish students could use this sacred space, Butler asserted, “Columbia University is a

³⁰⁴ “The Views of Persons Who Know Mr. Low,” *The American Hebrew*, November 1, 1901, 619.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ “Jewish Theological Seminary: Opening of the New Building,” *The Jewish Messenger*, May 27, 1892, 3.

³⁰⁷ “Seth Low and Anti-Semitism,” *The American Hebrew*, November 1, 1901, 619.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Harold S. Wechsler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America* (Transaction Publishers, 2014).

Christian institution.”³⁰⁹ Historians argue that these tensions tipped Low toward the decision to resign from the board in 1914.³¹⁰

Upholding “Usefulness”³¹¹

Just as he supported Burgess’s advocacy for the School of Political Science with trustee votes in the 1880s, Low prioritized developing its curriculum to spark public service from the Columbia classroom. This plan was reminiscent of the inclusion of “Civil Government” courses in public schools during his Brooklyn mayoralty. German universities also emphasized legal theory and practice; in 1888, the 26,915 students across Germany’s twenty universities predominantly matriculated in the “juristic” department.³¹² The financial and diplomatic support that Low gave to the School of Political Science during his presidency affirmed his determination to help Columbia keep pace with German higher education and train experts in governance. Whereas the Philosophy Department received an allocation of \$9,750 in 1899, Low ensured that the School of Political Science received \$60,584.48.³¹³

Departmental reports delivered to the president indicated that the faculty supported Low’s emphasis on political science and sought to advance its reach. In 1890, the Political Science and Social Science Report recommended an increase in the number of instructors to match the heightened demand of this education revealed by enrollments. Richard Mayo Smith spoke on behalf of his colleagues, advising the addition of Professorships of Political Economy

³⁰⁹ President Nicholas Murray Butler established a “satellite campus” called “Seth Low Junior College” in Brooklyn in 1928, a development that historians attribute to his “fear that Columbia was becoming a ‘Jewish school.’” Wechsler, *The Qualified Student*. Michael Rosenthal, *Nicholas Miraculous: The Amazing Career of the Redoubtable Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), xiv.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report,” October 1, 1900 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” October 1, 1900. RBML.

³¹² More specifically, the breakdown between the academic departments as of May 1888 was: 8006 students in the philosophy faculty, 6,060 in the medical faculty, 6,701 in the theological faculty, and 8,700 in the juristic faculty. “German University Students,” *The Hartford Courant*, May 14, 1888, 3.

³¹³ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-” October 7, 1899, 17. RBML.

and Statistics, Political Economy and Finance, and Ethnology and Sociology.³¹⁴ Although hired as a lecturer in 1885, civic service-minded Seligman—who logged a forty-five-year career at Columbia—received approval for a full professorship during Low’s presidency.³¹⁵

As if responding directly to the student editorials of his undergraduate years that shamed Columbia for its dearth of graduates in government positions, Low announced his success in supporting the School of Political Science to mobilize public service through its pedagogy. In one of his final presidential addresses, Low celebrated the large number of recent Political Science graduates who held state and federal government positions.³¹⁶ He announced that twenty-five recent School of Political Science graduates taught political economy at institutions throughout the country.³¹⁷ By framing the implementation and instruction of political science as similarly noble contributions to public service, Low affirmed that the practice and study of governance were crucially intertwined. Through his final year in office, Low boasted the addition of courses on “The Governmental Organization of the Territories and other Dependencies of the United States” led by Professor Burgess and the “Institutes of Spanish Law” in the wake of the Spanish-American War.³¹⁸

This president brought leading scholars to Columbia. His invitation to British Parliament member and *American Commonwealth* author James Bryce received a reply the next day.³¹⁹

Bryce consented to speak at Columbia under the condition that he not deliver a lecture, a caveat

³¹⁴ Richmond Mayo Smith to Seth Low, *Report of the Department of Political Science and Social Science*, December 18, 1890. Call Number: UA #0188. Departmental Reports to President Seth Low, 1890-1900. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

³¹⁵ Bender, *Intellect and Public Life*, 56.

³¹⁶ Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report,” October 1, 1900 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-” October 1, 1900, 8. RBML.

³¹⁷ These institutions included Yale, Cornell, Amherst, Bryn Mawr, Smith, Syracuse, and the Universities of Illinois, Indiana, and Colorado, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Ibid

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ James Bryce to Seth Low October 29, 1890. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

that he noted also applied to his visits to Cornell, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins. In 1901, Bryce received an honorary LL.D. degree from Columbia.³²⁰ Such opportunities to animate students' coursework doubled as chances for Columbia professors to mingle with leading political scientists.³²¹ These programs resulted in increased student enrollment in the School of Political Science; the ninety-four students enrolled during the 1894-1895 academic year grew to 346 students during Low's presidency.³²²

Low sponsored not only the teaching of political science but also pedagogy as a discipline in itself.³²³ This duality evoked the German support for scholarship as a profession in itself.³²⁴ In 1901, Low led the decision to add a Bachelor of Science degree to Teachers College, with further plans to build a dormitory.³²⁵ Therefore, in keeping with German advocacy for specialized studies, the University Council continued to describe Teachers College as a "professional school," but one now with closer ties to the university.³²⁶

As Columbia adjusted its admissions protocol in accordance with such curriculum reforms, Low fit historians' characterizations of corporate liberals as figures who learned to "reconcile old traditions with new conditions."³²⁷ These revisions deemphasized Classics to make way for practical skills. However, Low remained firm that Columbia men study Latin for a minimum of three years for five hours weekly to receive a diploma, regardless of prior training

³²⁰ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 7, 1901. RBML.

³²¹ James Bryce to Seth Low, October 29, 1890. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³²² Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," October 5, 1896, 45 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 5, 1896. RBML.

³²³ Likewise, in 1895, the Columbia University Trustees founded the "Seth Low Professorship of American History" in his name. Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," June 3, 1895. RBML.

³²⁴ Ibid., 105. R. E. D., "A German University: Glimpses of Its Methods and Its Men," *The Hartford Courant*, January 16, 1890, 3.

³²⁵ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," 1901, 5 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 7, 1901. RBML.

³²⁶ "Teachers College to Become a Part of the University," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, January 19, 1898.

³²⁷ Richard R. John and Kim Phillips-Fein, eds., *Capital Gains: Business and Politics in Twentieth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 182.

in the language.³²⁸ The faculty echoed his support for this development. At the opening of Columbia's Morningside Heights campus in 1896, zoology Professor Henry Osborn described the university as both "rising, like Minerva," and offering "specialization and energy."³²⁹ Low further revolutionized Columbia's traditional Classics-based cannon for the 1901 commencement ceremony.³³⁰ Whereas degrees had been conferred in Latin during all prior graduations, that year saw the ceremony conducted in English.³³¹ Low explained that he supported this change as a means to increase the audience's engagement in the ceremony's proceedings.³³² By the middle of his term, Low acknowledged a new trend in the Admissions Office's recruits, which he credited in part to the increasing interest in the School of Political Science: students' hometowns now pushed beyond New York City and Brooklyn.³³³ For example, students from states west of the Mississippi and east of the Rockies rose from twenty-nine in 1892 to sixty in 1895.³³⁴ Columbia under Seth Low had claimed New York as the epicenter for education in the social science skills that unveiled a corporate liberal ideology.

The advancement of the library to befit a research university captured the ambitions of Low's presidency. Columbia librarian George Baker encouraged Low to understand the library as a key technology for introducing students to the Germanic model of higher education. Baker recommended a two-pronged strategy for this goal. First, he proposed that the collection consist of texts that facilitated the study of German history and civilization.³³⁵ In the year before

³²⁸ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," October 1, 1900 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 1, 1900, 8. RBML.

³²⁹ "New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony," *New York Times*, May 3, 1896.

³³⁰ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," October 7, 1901, 13 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," October 7, 1901. RBML.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," July 1895, 3 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," July 1895.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ George H. Baker to Seth Low, May 12, 1896. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

Columbia relocated to Morningside Heights, 18,432 new books arrived in its library, resulting in a collection that “embraces all German research in these fields during the last thirty or forty years.”³³⁶ Baker also advised that Columbia strive to match German universities in establishing robust facilities for reading and studying.³³⁷ Joining Low in his goals to blur boundaries between the college and the city, Baker wrote Low with ideas for advertising and opening Columbia’s library to the public.³³⁸ Library usage, measured by loan counts, increased consistently throughout Low’s administration.

“A strong hold upon the population to which it turns for support”³³⁹

Low integrated the Columbia curriculum into the city by establishing—and frequently updating—a program of public lectures held each winter.³⁴⁰ Lectures at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cooper Union, and the American Museum of Natural History featured titles including “History of Chemistry,” “The Vegetable World in Its Economic Aspects,” and “Bacteria and Their Relation to Health and Disease.”³⁴¹ Americans’ interest in Berlin University’s art galleries suggested that Low looked to the German tendency to unite respect for cultural artifacts with an educational institution when curating these programs.³⁴² Advertisements for Columbia’s public lectures credited Low with their formation and emphasized that admission was free of charge.³⁴³ These promotions further emphasized that Columbia professors structured their lectures to appeal to both field experts and laymen.³⁴⁴

³³⁶ “The New Columbia Rising: Some of the Walls Already Above Ground,” *New-York Tribune*, April 19, 1896, 28.

³³⁷ George H. Baker to Seth Low, May 12, 1896. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³³⁸ George H. Baker to Seth Low, January 23, 1896. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³³⁹ Seth Low, “The Relation of the University to the Community in which it Exists” (speech, University of Chicago Convocation, December 1894).

³⁴⁰ As late as 1901, the trustees raised the allocation for public lectures to \$2,500. Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” May 6, 1901, 121.

³⁴¹ “Free Lectures on Science and Art: The Columbia College Course in the Museums of Natural History and Art,” *New York Times*, November 26, 1894, 9.

³⁴² “A German University: Glimpses of Its Methods and Its Men,” *The Hartford Courant*, January 16, 1890, 3.

³⁴³ “Free Lectures on Science and Art: The Columbia College Course in the Museums of Natural History and Art,” *New York Times*, November 26, 1894, 9.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

This initiative embodied Low's interest in cross-fertilization between the college and the city as a means by which to include those whose fathers did not lay claim to corporate New York. According to Low, the lecture series "makes the people of the City of New York appreciate that the university is of consequence to them as well as to the comparatively few who are enrolled among the ranks of students."³⁴⁵ While Columbia did not receive a financial boost from these free public lectures, it reaped access to these museums' collections in return for its work.³⁴⁶ This arrangement thereby advanced Low's mission to diversify opportunities for Columbia to practice German research methods.

Low's Columbia also reshaped public service through its contribution to the University Settlement of New York City. In 1891, Low assumed the presidency of this society that united elected undergraduates, neighborhood residents, and college graduates in its pledge to found housing settlements in a setting packed with privilege.³⁴⁷ Columbia historian Robert McCaughey highlights Low's contributions to settlement housing in Morningside Heights during his Columbia presidency as an important means by which Low became "the personification of civic engagement" for the university community.³⁴⁸

"A great day for Columbia University, and a great day for New York as well"³⁴⁹

In 1891, Low and the trustees renamed "Columbia College in the City of New York" as "Columbia University in the City of New York."³⁵⁰ Low likened the nomenclature of "university" to a mountain, using this metaphor to define a university as "the greatest thing of the

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁴⁶ Seth Low, "A City University: Address" (speech, Johns Hopkins University, February 22, 1895), in Series I: Historical Biographical Files. UA #004. Box 345, Folder 1/ 8, "Low, Seth, President of Columbia University, 1889-1915. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

³⁴⁷ Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 83.

³⁴⁸ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 210.

³⁴⁹ "Columbia's Gala Day: Plans for the Dedication Ceremonies," *New-York Tribune*, April 30, 1896, 12.

³⁵⁰ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees," February 2, 1891, 32-33. RBML.

kind to be found in the neighborhood.”³⁵¹ Evoking German ideology, Low opened the article on Columbia that he was commissioned to write for *Encyclopedia Britannica* by distinguishing it as a university: an institution that prepared its students to specialize and to research, goals that ran counter to those of Sproat’s “best men” who avoided involvement in the intricacies of specialized politics.³⁵²

The “university” name increased urgency to finalize suggestions to relocate Columbia’s campus that percolated before Low’s presidency. Low fought the trustees’ proposal to transfer Columbia’s campus to Westchester. Although the board’s clerk John Pine located grounds in Morningside Heights, the \$2 million price tag and estimated \$4 million required construction slowed approval from the bench—until Low’s presidency. Low approached the governors of New York Hospital and brokered a deal in which Columbia would buy the hospital’s land.³⁵³ Approximately six-hundred construction workers transformed the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum’s former site into a university complex, spanning 116th through 120th Streets.³⁵⁴

The business strategy and support that Low secured between his Columbia graduation and his administrative positions proved critical to the construction of this research university campus.³⁵⁵ Low had fundraised for Columbia’s Alumni Association throughout the 1870s. These skills of soliciting donations from the prosperous sons of Columbia directly applied to his presidency.³⁵⁶ Low’s fundraising campaign for the new campus exceeded the results of any in

³⁵¹ Seth Low, “The Relation of the University to the Community in which it Exists” (speech, University of Chicago Convocation, December 1894). Ms Coll Low. Speeches 1- Box 23. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³⁵² Seth Low, “Columbia University,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

³⁵³ David A. Rosner, *A Once Charitable Enterprise: Hospitals and Health Care in Brooklyn and New York, 1885-1915* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 182.

³⁵⁴ Such a strategy may appear to perpetuate Columbia’s earlier reputation as a resort for New York’s ritziest young men. However, Kurland notes that the labor called upon to mobilize this campus employed New Yorkers who suffered from the economic depression of the 1890s. Kurland, *Seth Low*, 60.

³⁵⁵ “The New Columbia Rising: Some of the Walls Already Above Ground,” *New-York Tribune*, April 19, 1896, 28.

³⁵⁶ Kurland, *Seth Low*, 60.

Columbia's history and secured the Morningside Heights site.³⁵⁷ This campaign received \$100,000 gifts from Cornelius Vanderbilt and J.P. Morgan and a \$200,000 donation from Dan Fayerweather.³⁵⁸ This wave of contributions resulted in a building-naming boom, prompted by William Schermerhorn's \$45,000 bequest for a science building and followed by gifts from Samuel Avery, the Havemeyer family, William Dodge, and Adolph Lewisohn.³⁵⁹

Some historians, including David Rosner, view this negotiation as furthering an elite agenda to control the real estate development of the Upper West Side.³⁶⁰ In fact, Cornelius Vanderbilt, who strategized his use of his family fortune as Low became a trustee, sat on Columbia's Committee on Buildings through 1897.³⁶¹ While acknowledging Rosner's argument, this thesis places its emphasis on Low's networking with the boards of New York Hospital and Columbia as a pragmatic means to the end of founding an inclusive institution.

The Low family aided in financing this initiative. Abiel Abbot Low, did not anticipate Columbia alumni's apathy for donating to Alma Mater.³⁶² He offered to match \$5,000 for every pledge of \$100,00 that his son secured from fellow trustees or New Yorkers to finalize the transaction with the New York Hospital for the transfer of the Morningside Heights plot to Columbia University.³⁶³ However, A.A. Low put pressure on his son by setting a deadline of June 1 for the solidification of this arrangement.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Dolkart, *Morningside Heights*, 114.

³⁵⁹ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 207.

³⁶⁰ Rosner, *A Once Charitable Enterprise*, 183.

³⁶¹ Seth Low, "Annual Presidential Report," 1897, 46 in Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-," 1897.

³⁶² A.A. Low to Seth Low, May 30, 1892. Ms Coll Low. Series: Catalogue Correspondence. Vol./Box: L. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

This familial financial support peaked after A.A. Low's death. Memorializing his recently deceased father by citing his conviction that "commerce is the handmaid of civilization," Low addressed the trustees in 1895. Confirming his father's status as "a merchant who taught his son to value the things for which Columbia College stands," Low proposed a personal contribution of \$1,000,000 from his inheritance to erect a University Library on the new campus.³⁶⁵ As emphasized by the press, Low even merged study and governance at Columbia by ultimately housing the reference library and administrative offices in the same building, today's "Low Library."³⁶⁶ Low's commitment to Columbia's libraries persisted, announcing funding received from mysterious "friends" who helped realize his goal to open specialization-based reading rooms during his administration.³⁶⁷

Low approached his consequent architectural project on the "Acropolis of New York" as an opportunity to visually assert business efficiency.³⁶⁸ The trustees hotly debated which architect to select for their new headquarters, ultimately choosing Charles McKim of McKim, Mead & White for his Beaux-Arts proposal.³⁶⁹ The plan derived from a model exhibited at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the "Nénot design" for the Sorbonne in Paris.³⁷⁰ Just as Low promoted public lectures that reminded New Yorkers of their stakes in the university—and university affiliates of their stake in the city—he encouraged the board to approve a public exhibition of McKim's plans for the Morningside Heights campus buildings.³⁷¹

³⁶⁵ Capital letters are retained from archival sources. Seth Low to the Trustees of Columbia College, May 6, 1895. Ms Coll Low. Box 67. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³⁶⁶ "The New Columbia Rising: Some of the Walls Already Above Ground," *New-York Tribune*, April 19, 1896, 28.

³⁶⁷ Columbia University Trustees, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-," June 3, 1901. RBML.

³⁶⁸ Seth Low, "Columbia University," *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Dolkart, *Morningside Heights*, 125-126.

³⁶⁹ "A Superb College Site: The New Home Which Columbia Is Preparing on Riverside Heights," *New-York Tribune*, October 31, 1894, 9.

³⁷⁰ Allan Greenberg and Michael George, *The Architecture of McKim, Mead, and White 1879-1915* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1925), xvi.

³⁷¹ "At Columbia College: Plans for the New Buildings to be Placed on Exhibition," *New York Times*, November 12, 1894, 9.

He forged connections between city and university by welcoming McKim to borrow architectural design from the Pantheon and Baths of Caracalla, focal points of the ancient city of Rome.³⁷² The library's Greek-cross shape with angled corners topped with a dome and drum utilized the space and demonstrated Columbia's respect for the Classical tradition.³⁷³ Discouraging plans for a fence, Low vigorously supported McKim's creation of a plaza, a built invitation for the intermingling of diverse city residents and college students.³⁷⁴ However, one should not confuse these aesthetics with affectation. In fact, Low corresponded with McKim directly and frequently to strategize alternatives to marble should Columbia's funds dry up.³⁷⁵

The geographical and architectural decisions that directed this project reaffirmed Low's interest in placing Columbia and New York City in conversation. Schermerhorn Hall and the physics building were constructed on the land that witnessed the 1776 Battle of Harlem.³⁷⁶ The contest claimed thirty American lives and ninety British troops as New York asserted that its people would hustle to hasten the arrival of American liberty.³⁷⁷ Therefore, Low allowed the university to, quite literally, occupy a site on which, in his own words, "the soil drank the blood of patriots."³⁷⁸ This self-awareness of the stakes of such topography to New York's reputation signals Low's goal to include Columbia in the city's contributions to American history.

Leaders in education and government congregated for the dedication of Columbia's Morningside site, an occasion replete with mortarboards and music bands.³⁷⁹ New York's

³⁷² Dolkart, *Morningside Heights*, 127. Joseph Choate to Seth Low, June 10, 1916. Ms. Coll Low. Vol./Box: 66-68. 135.016. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁷⁶ "New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony," *New York Times*, May 3, 1896, 9.

³⁷⁷ David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 217.

³⁷⁸ Seth Low, Address at the Dedication of the University Grounds in "New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony," *New York Times*, May 3, 1896, 9.

³⁷⁹ "New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony," *New York Times*, May 3, 1896, 9.

governor, speaker of the assembly, and mayor heard Lafayette Post of the Grand Army Republic present the national colors.³⁸⁰ Low interpreted this moment as confirmation that “the men of Columbia pledged themselves, both as scholars and as men to “love, cherish and defend” the flag and to engage in service.³⁸¹ Columbia’s relocation thereby responded to Low’s missions to both draw students and encourage public service. The student body during the 1891-1892 academic year numbered 1,573.³⁸² By the 1899-1900 academic year, Columbia boasted a student body of 2,452.³⁸³ The School of Political Science secured 252 more students in the year following the campus’s relocation uptown.³⁸⁴

Regarding student demographics, Barnard College’s 1889 establishment offered a solution for the coeducation questions that materialized since Low’s early trustee days. As president, Low spoke up in support of women’s studies and involvement in social science movements. Barnard’s founder Annie Nathan Meyer, characterized Low as “one of the most just men I have ever known and one whose services to Barnard simply cannot be overestimated.”³⁸⁵ The 1900 incorporation of Barnard College “in the educational system of the University” placed Columbia’s president as a trustee and “*ex-officio President of Barnard College;*” however,

³⁸⁰ Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report for 1895,” October 7, 1896, 4-1 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” October 7, 1896. RBML.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report,” October 7, 1895, 3 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” October 7, 1895. RBML.

³⁸³ Seth Low, “Annual Presidential Report,” October 1, 1900, 20 in Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” October 1, 1900. RBML.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ Annie Nathan Meyer, *Barnard Beginnings* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1935).

administrative duties remained with a Barnard Dean appointed by Columbia's president.³⁸⁶ Low also corresponded with Progressive reformer Josephine Lowell throughout his presidency.³⁸⁷

“The little one has become a strong people”³⁸⁸

So spoke Seth Low as he looked upon his research university. This self-evaluation supports the argument that Low's governance of this university proved a pivotal step in his own configuration as a corporate liberal. To borrow Weinstein's vocabulary, these eleven years positioned Low to master corporate liberalism's “extra-political negotiation between various social groupings;” he revised Columbia's responsibilities by shaping a new campus that housed political science laboratories, distributed aid, and heard the voices of female and Jewish New York.³⁸⁹ Such a grasp of the tensions between constituents and a historically corporate elite administration materialized in Low's 1901 resignation letter from the Columbia presidency. Seth Low reasoned:

Columbia University cannot teach men to be patriotic if it will make no sacrifices in the public interest...Not even Columbia's President can expect to be exempt from the obligation to illustrate good citizenship, as well as to teach it.”³⁹⁰

This understanding of the union of teaching and governing steered this president to Brooklyn's “sister city.”³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees 1755-,” January 91, 1900. RBML.

³⁸⁷ Josephine Shaw Lowell to Seth Low, December 14, 1893. Ms Coll Low. Catalogued Correspondence. Vol/Box: L. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³⁸⁸ Seth Low, “Address at the Dedication of the University Grounds” (speech, Columbia University, 1896) in “New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1896, 9.

³⁸⁹ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, xv. Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 20.

³⁹⁰ Seth Low, “Address at the Dedication of the University Grounds” (speech, Columbia University, 1896) in “New Site of Columbia: The University's Grounds Dedicated with Great Ceremony,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), May 3, 1896, 9.

³⁹¹ Seth Low, “Address of Mayor Low, delivered at the Brooklyn Rink” (speech, Brooklyn Rink, November 3, 1883). Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 2. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1903. Scrapbook 2. RBML.

**Chapter V: “Let us consider now what the college means to the city:”³⁹²
Seth Low as New York City Mayor (1902-1903)**

“The Real World Is Not to Be Found in Books”³⁹³

Before Low filed that resignation letter, he extended his participation in public service beyond the Columbia classroom and into the City of New York. In 1896, the Governor of New York asked Low to serve on the Greater New York Charter Commission, which drew up the provisions for borough consolidation and established ten council districts per borough.³⁹⁴ Labor organizations across the city also increasingly drafted Columbia’s president as their umpire. Their requests that he assist in mediating arguments between employees and employers suggested recognition of a reformer, one whose project propelled corporate liberalism.

New York City prickled with political corruption as Low contemplated how to negotiate this duel between “bosses” and “reformers.” Historian David Hammack proposes that the interval between 1886 and 1903 constituted a “Transition Period” from a “merchant-dominated polity.”³⁹⁵ By 1898, the city’s total expenditures were two-thirds as great as those for the entire United States.³⁹⁶ As noted by Low at a gathering of mayors in Chicago, the early 1900s were “days in which everybody tends toward the city” due to the availability of employment and entertainment.³⁹⁷

During his two campaigns and two-year mayoralty, Low borrowed his Columbia science of administration to govern Greater New York. In 1893, eight years before his New York City mayoral election, Low asserted that a university “must have a strong hold upon the population to

³⁹² Seth Low, “Inaugural Address” (speech, Metropolitan Opera House, February 3, 1890).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ “Greater New York: Governor Black Signs the Charter—Its Provisions,” *The Hartford Courant*, May 6, 1897, 1.

³⁹⁵ Hammack, *Power and Society*, 110.

³⁹⁶ Edward Dana Durand, *The Finances of New York City* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), v.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

which it turns for support.”³⁹⁸ Likewise, Low helped organize municipal administration by taking budgeting and governing responsibilities out of the hands of elite representatives and into those of experts, often from Columbia. For example, in 1901, Mayor-Elect Low appointed George L. Rives, a Columbia College and Columbia Law School alumnus as the city’s Law Officer.³⁹⁹ Low consequently received praise such as “never was there a more democratic official.”⁴⁰⁰ It was in this administration that Low consolidated his message that corporate liberalism nurtured democracy for New York City.

“A Vote Getter”⁴⁰¹

As early as 1894, New York politicians whispered about Low’s competitiveness for a mayoral ticket. Although he did not receive a slot on the ballot, he received increasing requests for interviews. Through this publicity, Low advocated that New York entrust Mayor-Elect William Strong to instigate “a clean sweep” of city department members, a viewpoint that evoked his own implementation of such practices both in Brooklyn and at Columbia.⁴⁰²

Correspondence with his Columbia successor, President Nicholas Murray Butler, revealed that summer 1897 found Low eyeing a mayoral bid.⁴⁰³ The Citizens’ Union, “a third party intended to be active only in municipal affairs,” selected Low as its candidate, pitting him against fellow Columbia alumnus Robert Van Wyck of Tammany Hall, Benjamin F. Tracey of the Republicans, and Henry George of the Jeffersonian Democracy.⁴⁰⁴ Anxiety flared at Columbia; Low’s celebrity swelled since he moved Columbia to Morningside Heights, and a

³⁹⁸ Seth Low, “The Relation of the University to the Community in which it Exists” (speech, Association Hall, March 15, 1893), 5 in Ms Coll Low. Box 23. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

³⁹⁹ Rives sat on the Columbia University Board of Trustees that elected Low to the presidency. “Appointment of Rives: Head of the Charter Revision Commission to Be the City’s Law Officer,” *New-York Tribune*, November 16, 1901, 1. Columbia University Trustees, “Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1755-,” October 7, 1889, RBML.

⁴⁰⁰ R.L.S., “Seth Low Pre-Eminent,” *New-York Tribune*, December 7, 1900, 2.

⁴⁰¹ “Seth Low as A Vote Getter: Some Figures of Special and Timely Interest,” *New-York Tribune*, June 7, 1903.

⁴⁰² “Give the Mayor Full Power,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1894, 1.

⁴⁰³ Seth Low to Nicholas Murray Butler, August 23, 1897. Ms Coll Low. Vol./Box 47. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

⁴⁰⁴ Hammack, *Power and Society*, 115-116. Low, *Seth Low*, 63.

mayoral win that would cost the university its president seemed conceivable. Burgess attempted to intercept what he deemed an impending “calamity upon the University” by urging Low to take a leave of absence, rather than resign, during his campaign.⁴⁰⁵ The priorities of Low’s Columbia presidency characterized his platform; reminiscent of the increasingly international ideological footing of Low’s university administration, his campaign speeches “talked of the London County Council’s city-built housing for the working class,” and “sewage farms as in Berlin.”⁴⁰⁶

Not even death could extinguish the competitiveness of this mayoral campaign, dubbed “the greatest civic battle of the century.”⁴⁰⁷ Although the Citizens’ Union anticipated that Democrats would throw their support to Low after the death of Henry George four days before Election Day, Van Wyck earned their votes and victory. Despite this defeat, Low maintained his commitment to public service, joining a delegation to a Peace Conference at The Hague in 1899 and increasing his philanthropic support of Columbia with a \$75,000 donation for library upgrades.⁴⁰⁸ When the Citizens’ Union again tapped Low to be its candidate in 1901, he requested proof of a “popular call.” The party returned with a petition featuring approximately 130,000 signatures of New Yorkers “of every political party and of every rank of life” in support of his prospective candidacy.⁴⁰⁹ Russian jurist and graduate of the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques*, Moisei Ostrogorsky announced in 1902 that “this popular investiture which ignored

⁴⁰⁵ John W. Burgess to Seth Low, September 7, 1897. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

⁴⁰⁶ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 138.

⁴⁰⁷ “Henry George Dies on The Eve of Battle,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 1897.

⁴⁰⁸ “Peace Congress Members: Men Who Will Represent the United States at The Hague,” *New-York Tribune*, April 7, 1899, 7. “Dean Van Amringe, Acting President,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 2, 1899.

⁴⁰⁹ Fredman, “Seth Low: Theorist of Municipal Reform,” 32. Moisei Ostrogorski. Frederick Clarke, trans. *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (New York: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1902), 469.

party distinctions, was a veritable revolution in American political methods;” international leaders listened for the nomination of Seth Low, a champion of employees and educators.⁴¹⁰

Although Columbia supported the possibility of Low’s straddling the duties of the presidency and the campaign in 1897, Low was requested to file his resignation letter before Election Day in 1901.⁴¹¹ Despite the trustees’ reluctance to permit the president to take the stump, many Columbians supported Low’s campaign. For example, Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch, one of the first women to attend the School of Political Science, canvassed for Low.⁴¹² During the 1897 campaign, Columbia students created “The Seth Low Political Club,” that encouraged voter registration and distributed Low’s campaign buttons.⁴¹³ In 1901, however, Low discouraged students from participating in his campaign.⁴¹⁴ This rejection of a political club at Columbia reaffirms Low’s intention to push back on expectations that he would conform with the “best men” of the nineteenth century’s reliance on “good government clubs.” Some supporters from Morningside Heights harbored alternate motives, as Butler championed Low’s 1901 campaign, which smacked of his own desire to become Columbia’s president.⁴¹⁵

However, Low refused to join the 1901 race without Republican backing. So, the Citizens’ Union agreed to negotiate a “fusion ticket.”⁴¹⁶ A “fusion” amounted to a deal in which reformers and Republicans both logged Seth Low as their candidate on the ballot.⁴¹⁷ This campaign strategy evoked Low’s consistent crusade for non-partisanship throughout his

⁴¹⁰ Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, 469.

⁴¹¹ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 210.

⁴¹² Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 32.

⁴¹³ “The Seth Low Political Club,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 13, 1897.

⁴¹⁴ “Columbia Men at Camp Low,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 22, 1901.

⁴¹⁵ Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 370.

⁴¹⁶ Mayoral candidates who followed Seth Low modeled their campaigns on this “fusion” ticket, including Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia. Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. *The Encyclopedia of New York City*. Yale University Press, 1995.

⁴¹⁷ Terry Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics* (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014).

administrative positions. After a five-hour debate, the Committee of Eighteen approved this fusion ticket with a 67 to 2 vote.⁴¹⁸ Low welcomed all religious groups in his campaign, actively seeking the Eastern European Jewish vote, evoking his engagement of Jewish Theological Seminary students during his Columbia presidency.⁴¹⁹ Remaining consistent with this non-partisan preference, Low did not frequently criticize Tammany Hall. Instead, he urged supporters on the campaign trail, “this fight is your fight.”⁴²⁰

With 296,813 votes, Low clinched the lead over his opponent, Edward Shepard, who claimed 265,177 votes.⁴²¹ Along with Low’s win, this Election Day replaced eighteen of the thirty-five district leaders who aligned with Tammany Hall.⁴²² Upon his election, Low announced that he would withdraw his ownership of investments that had bearing on city government. This decision cost him “over a million and a half dollars’ worth of securities in various financial and other institutions.”⁴²³

“Conducting the Public Business”⁴²⁴

As in his prior positions, Mayor Low quickly assembled a cabinet and thereby “put the city upon a business— an honest business—basis.”⁴²⁵ Evoking his 1883 approval of Brooklyn’s civil service reform bill, he argued that “merit should be the sole test for his appointees” to the seven hundred and thirty-one offices that he would fill as mayor.⁴²⁶ Akin to his previous

⁴¹⁸ “Columbia’s President Put Forward at the General Fusion Conference Last Night After a Long and Stormy Session,” *The World*, September 19, 1901. UA #004. Series I: Historical Biographical Files, Box 345, Box 1/18, “Low, Seth, Mayor of New York City, 1897-1901.” Columbia University Archives. RBML.

⁴¹⁹ Chris McNickle, *To Be Mayor of New York: Ethnic Politics in the City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 18.

⁴²⁰ Golway, *Machine Made: Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics*.

⁴²¹ Joseph Coviello, “Seth Low as Mayor of New York City” (master’s thesis, Columbia University, 1938), 6.

⁴²² “Tammany Yields Power to Seth Low Reformers,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1902.

⁴²³ “Seth Low Steals March on Satan: Sets A Lofty Example for All Public Servants,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1902, 3.

⁴²⁴ “The Mayor and the Citizens’ Union,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1902, 8.

⁴²⁵ Low, *Seth Low*, 70.

⁴²⁶ Coviello, “Seth Low as Mayor of New York City,” 8.

administrative agenda, Low required that this cabinet meet with him weekly.⁴²⁷ Low assembled a bipartisan cabinet. He allocated posts to fifteen Republicans, eleven Democrats (three of whom voted for his opponent on Election Day), and five Citizens' Union members. Low's appointments later in his administration also attracted attention. The Supervisor of Racing Accounts wrote Low to express his gratitude for his selection of George Archer as Mayor's Office Clerk. He praised that this appointment served as "evidence that the Chief Executive of this City desires to see his Colored fellow-citizens receive proper recognition in appointments to offices of honor and emolument."⁴²⁸

Low's management of the municipal budget communicated his concern for supporting New Yorkers absent from the boardrooms of patrician schools and hospitals. "Economy to be the New Administration's Watchword," announced the *New York Times*.⁴²⁹ As early as his second day in office, Low consulted with Controller Grout, his partner in constructing financial policy for the administration that aimed to slash the government costs that had climbed to over \$100,000,000 during Van Wyck's administration.⁴³⁰ The new city charter allowed the mayor to adjust the budget.⁴³¹ In 1902, a \$98,619,000 budget came into Low's hands.⁴³² This figure may raise questions, as it represented a \$645,059 increase from Mayor Van Wyck's final budget.⁴³³ However, the apportionment of this budget evidenced Low's enduring concern for those New Yorkers who did not align with the business elite. Low funneled funds out of Manhattan and into the boroughs, enabling the implementation of fire

⁴²⁷ Seth Low to Hon. Thomas W. Hynes, January 15, 1902. Collection No. 0016. Office of the Mayor Letter books, 1834-1934, Vol. 103-Vol. 105 (1902): Low, Vol 103, Box #36, New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴²⁸ Charles W. Anderson to Seth Low, January 4, 1902. Series III: General Correspondence Received, Box 1, Folder A: 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴²⁹ "Mayor Low Will Reduce the Budget: Economy to be the New Administration's Watchword," *New York Times*, January 3, 1902, 14.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² "Mayor Low Approves the New City Budget," *New York Times*, May 1, 1902, 2.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

alarms, street cleaning, and charitable food distribution.⁴³⁴ This funding also targeted the pockets of the College of the City of New York, the Queens Borough, and public charities.⁴³⁵ Taxes trended similarly, resulting in a rate of 2.27384 that marked a 0.04349 decrease.⁴³⁶

Central to this budget and Low's mayoralty was public education. During his Columbia presidency, Low donated his salary to the New York Kindergarten Association that financed kindergarten classes for poor children.⁴³⁷ Likewise, as chief administrator of New York City, Low changed a school system that could not accommodate approximately 88,000 students on a full-time basis.⁴³⁸ By 1903, Low announced that this rate had been increased to three-quarter time.⁴³⁹ Furthermore, these students on three-quarter time schooling received instruction from teachers designated exclusively for this group. This avoided the prior problem of assigning teaching staff both morning and afternoon classes, a workload that did not allow them to teach lessons of equal vigor to both sets of students.⁴⁴⁰ This core issue of Low's administration can be characterized as his reaction—one that this thesis understands as corporate liberal—to the “successful, conservative businessmen” who “preferred to make changes in a cautious manner” from their perch on the New York Board of Education in the 1880s.⁴⁴¹

The Germanic model of education also resonated in Low's education reforms as mayor. Low's Board of Education added German to public schools' language curriculum.⁴⁴² This measure proved popular, and New York parents opposed when schools restricted access to the

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ “Tax Rate for 1902,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1902, 14.

⁴³⁷ Citizens' Union, “Seth Low for mayor: his life and public record,” 1897.

⁴³⁸ “Low Talks of Schools,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1903, 3.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of New York City Public Schools* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1988), 113.

⁴⁴² “Low Talks of Schools,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1903, 3

language classes due to instructor availability.⁴⁴³ On a practical level, this curriculum reform linked city public schools to Columbia University. William Maxwell, City Superintendent of Schools, consulted with Professor William Carpenter from Columbia University's Department of Germanic Languages about this language instruction.⁴⁴⁴ The Emperor of Germany visited Low in New York City in 1902.⁴⁴⁵

Low supported public schools' faculty and staff throughout his mayoralty, reminiscent of his respect for the Columbia professoriate. For example, he established pensions for the faculty of City College. Low explicitly credited his mission to institute sabbaticals during his Columbia administration as inspiration for this project.⁴⁴⁶ In 1903, Low resumed his fight for faculty rights by holding a public hearing to discuss a bill to improve retirement funds for teachers and supervisors.⁴⁴⁷ Similarly, Low drew up acts that pledged to enhance compensation for city employees.⁴⁴⁸

These modifications to New York schools provided the framework within which Low could further instill principles of public service through education. Low wrote to the Board of Education in 1903 to organize events in public schools to mark the 250th anniversary of the Grant of Municipal Governance in the City of New Amsterdam.⁴⁴⁹ The plans, posed Low, "shall be

⁴⁴³ Seth Low to Henry A. Rogers, June 5, 1903. Folder #27: "Education, Board of." Series I: Departmental Correspondence Received, 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁴⁴ William H. Carpenter to William H. Maxwell, June 13, 1903, New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁴⁵ "Seth Low to the People of the City of New York," February 24, 1902. Box 5, Folder #49: "Mayor's Office." Series I: Departmental Correspondence Received, 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁴⁶ Seth Low, "Memorandum in relation to Senate Bill no. 781, providing a pension for the benefit of supervising officers and teachers of the City College," March 31, 1902. Seth Low Scrapbook, 12-13. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁴⁷ Henry A. Rogers to Seth Low, April 20, 1903. Folder #27: "Education, Board of," Series I: Departmental Correspondence Received, 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁴⁸ Seth Low, Untitled, Folder #51: "Mayor's Office," Series I: Departmental Correspondence Received, 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁴⁹ Seth Low to Hon. Henry A. Rogers, April 8, 1903. Folder 26: "Education, Board of." Series I: Departmental Correspondence Received, 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

calculated to bring home to the children, a sense of the long history of the City, and to awaken in them a desire to prove themselves worthy citizens of New York.”⁴⁵⁰ Likely taking his cues from the lecture series that he formed as Columbia’s president, Low spearheaded a week-long public lecture series on New York City’s history to mark this milestone for municipal governance.⁴⁵¹ It was through such initiatives that Low demonstrated, by example, the art of bridging the study and practice of public service.

Low favored libraries as mayor just as he did as Columbia’s president. Leaders across New York capitalized on Low’s interest in their field. In 1902, the Brooklyn Public Library’s Frank Hill wrote Columbia’s librarian about a bill to consolidate Brooklyn’s library.⁴⁵² The legislature had voted in the affirmative, and the outcome rested in Low’s forthcoming decision. Hill implored, “may I ask you to do what you can for us with His Honor both personally and through others who may have influence with him?”⁴⁵³ Persistent, Hill strategized his correspondence to Low himself to emphasize the links between New York’s libraries and the university library that he championed. Hill underscored that his call for consolidation hinged upon the importance of the “management” of a library.⁴⁵⁴ This language evoked Low’s own interest in applying business techniques to a university’s development.

Reminiscent of his Brooklyn Bridge project, Low also remodeled transit as mayor, demonstrating the democratic potential of a corporate liberal project. However, before Low could gain supporters through his dealings with rapid transit, he made enemies. In 1902, he

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Columbia’s librarian in 1902 was Dr. James Canfield.

⁴⁵³ Frank P. Hill to Dr. James A. Canfield, March 27, 1902. Office of the Mayor, Low, Seth Administration. Subject Files 1902-1903. Box 1, Folder 11: Morgan Library Bill - Brooklyn Library Incorporation 1902. Master Negative #8372 Roll: 1, Film Unit #MCD-2 15407. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

⁴⁵⁴ Frank P. Hill to Seth Low, April 1, 1902. Office of the Mayor, Low, Seth Administration. Subject Files 1902-1903. Box 1, Folder 11: Morgan Library Bill - Brooklyn Library Incorporation 1902. Master Negative #8372 Roll: 1, Film Unit #MCD-2 15407. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

approved a Pennsylvania Railroad plan that did not promise an eight-hour workday.⁴⁵⁵ Low later apologized for the decision and mobilized action for more equitable modes of public transportation. For example, in 1903, he pursued a unified subway system, stipulating a uniform fare to democratize the city's public transportation.⁴⁵⁶ This commitment to creating affordable modes of passage through Greater New York remained central to Low's work even after his mayoral term. In 1913, Low wrote to Governor William Sulzer to advise against the discontinuation of the Dual Subway Plan.

“The Lid is off! The Lid is off!”⁴⁵⁷

In November 1903, paper boys scooted through the streets of Manhattan, shouting, “The lid is off! The lid is off!”⁴⁵⁸ Over 61,000 votes had unseated Low from the mayoralty.⁴⁵⁹ Tammany Hall had reclaimed its hold on New York. Newspapers across the nation and the globe ran headlines about this startling defeat for Seth Low on the fusion ticket.⁴⁶⁰

One may attribute this loss to moments when Low slipped from the administrative science that secured his prior offices, maintained constituents' favor, and aligned with corporate liberalism. Although connections to his Columbia administration fortified his work, Low did not attend a Columbia board meeting while serving as New York's mayor; this decision contrasted his efforts to write in opinions to meetings during his Brooklyn mayoralty.⁴⁶¹

A *New York Times* Letter to the Editor proposed numerous causes for Low's defeat, two of which directly referenced tenets of his administrative agenda. For example, the twentieth century author noted that Low's program of weekend street cleaning—which frequently

⁴⁵⁵ Coviello, “Seth Low as Mayor of New York City,” 24.

⁴⁵⁶ “Mayor Low Discusses Subway Affairs,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1903, 16.

⁴⁵⁷ Low, *Seth Low*, 71.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ “Tammany's Big Victory: Complete Returns Give McClellan 63,617 Plurality Over Low,” *The Washington Post*, November 5, 1903, 3.

⁴⁶⁰ “Mr. Low to the City,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1903, 6.

⁴⁶¹ “The Honors to Seth Low,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 8, 1914.

employed Italian immigrants—precluded this population from joining the community at Sunday morning church service.⁴⁶² This suggestion conjured Low’s elimination of mandatory chapel at Columbia. Additionally, the author noted, “Mayor Low is too busy to be seen.”⁴⁶³ The very work ethic that had directed Low to academic, business, and administrative success had snared him. Hammack points to Low’s abandonment of his non-partisan leanings, noting that, within a year of his fusion ticket election, Low campaigned for the re-election of New York’s Republican Governor Benjamin Odell.⁴⁶⁴ Just as Low engaged the Jewish population through his Columbia administration, his 1901 mayoral campaign circulated a newspaper written in Yiddish.⁴⁶⁵ His support of Sunday laws, however, interfered with the profits of shopkeepers who observed the Sabbath; they cried out, “they have spoiled the business for us!” and kept their votes from Seth Low in 1903.⁴⁶⁶

Given Low’s reputation as a public servant, it is notable that newspapers described his opponent, George B. McClellan, as a “son of a Civil War general,” an epithet grounded in public service.⁴⁶⁷ Low’s model had not been extinguished. According to insiders, Low signed off on his note of congratulations and offer of counsel to Mayor-Elect McClellan that same evening. With this final assurance of “service” to an incoming New York administrator, Seth Low left the press room and municipal government with the words:

“I think that sums up all I desire to say tonight.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶² “A Constant Reader,” “Some Reasons for Low’s Defeat,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1903, 25.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ Hammack, *Power and Society*, 156.

⁴⁶⁵ Annie Polland and Daniel Soyer, *New York Jews in the Age of Immigration, 1840-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 192.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁶⁷ “Low Routed: McClellan Defeats Him for Mayor by Over 61,000,” *The Washington Post*, November 4, 1903, 1.

⁴⁶⁸ “Second Edition: Special Morning Express,” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1903.

Conclusion

“PUT LIABILITY ON EMPLOYERS.”⁴⁶⁹
 “SETH LOW CHOSEN FIRST ARBITRATOR.”⁴⁷⁰
 “LOW POINTS WAY.”⁴⁷¹

Seth Low had pointed the way to twentieth century governance since his teen years—and, in 1908, he confirmed it.

“No one enters the Civic Federation without an invitation from the executive council,” reported the press.⁴⁷² Seth Low received such a welcome, succeeding August Belmont to head the National Civic Federation (NCF) in 1908.⁴⁷³ Founded by Ralph Montgomery Easley—a former educator himself—in 1900, this organization believed, in Low’s words, that “the interests of capital and of labor are, for the most part, if not always, reconcilable.”⁴⁷⁴ Recognizing that organized and outspoken labor was in New York to stay, the NCF engaged business leaders with labor and “an undefined public.”⁴⁷⁵ Historians have characterized the organization, and its initiatives under Low’s administration, as a movement “born out of the trade [union] agreements movement and the philosophy of corporate liberalism.”⁴⁷⁶

The expertise with which Low engineered negotiations for the National Civic Federation emerged from the science of administration that he solidified as a Columbia trustee, Brooklyn

⁴⁶⁹ “Put Liability on Employers: Seth Low Elected President of National Civic Federation,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 16, 1908, 5.

⁴⁷⁰ “Seth Low Chosen First Arbitrator,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 12, 1913, 7.

⁴⁷¹ “Low Points Way: National Incorporation to Solve Trust Problem,” *New-York Tribune*, February 21, 1910.

⁴⁷² “Founder of the National Civic Federation,” *Hampton’s Magazine*, May 1, 1909, 706.

⁴⁷³ Low’s participation in the NCF predated his presidency. His papers at the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library contain correspondence sent from R. M. Easley and Adolphus Bartlett in Chicago in April 1901, informing the then-New York City Mayor Seth Low of a meeting of the Joint Committee on Conciliation and Arbitration in May; “for many reasons, this will be a most important meeting, and it is hoped that you can arrange to be present,” they urged. Adolphus Clay Bartlett and R. M. Easley to Seth Low, April 18, 1901. Ms Coll Low. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

⁴⁷⁴ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, 7. Seth Low. “Presidential Address,” 1912 in National Civic Federation, *Proceedings: Annual Meeting, Volume 12* (New York: National Civic Federation, 1912), 10.

⁴⁷⁵ Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, 7.

⁴⁷⁶ Kristofer Allerfeldt, ed. *The Progressive Era in the USA: 1890-1921* (Routledge, 2006).

mayor, Columbia president, and New York City mayor. Low's revisions to NCF processes intrigue historians, including Christopher Cyphers who writes that "Seth Low's leadership introduced a decidedly different approach to policy reform than that of presidents Hanna or Belmont."⁴⁷⁷ Just as Low organized committees for a research university and cities that could educate new generations of young men in public service, he "appointed a subcommittee of seven to investigate and draft" a law on public utilities.⁴⁷⁸ The proposal of a bill to amend the Sherman Anti-Trust Act so that it could no longer be used against trade unions during strikes constituted a centerpiece of Low's NCF career.⁴⁷⁹ Extending his mediation between employers and employees from the municipality and the university to the federal government, Low argued that "a trade agreement that does not issue in interstate trade lies altogether outside the scope of the law."⁴⁸⁰ Low explained, "it is important to recognize without limitation the right of labor to strike, to organize, and to make trade agreements."⁴⁸¹

Steeped in the social science ideology of governance shaped across his career, Low served alongside Columbia social scientist E.R.A. Seligman, who directed the NCF's Taxation Department.⁴⁸² Characterizations of Low's participation in the NCF specify that the organization aimed "to *educate* the business community to an awareness and acceptance of its

⁴⁷⁷ Christopher J. Cyphers, *The National Civic Federation and the Making of a New Liberalism, 1900-1915* (Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 34.

⁴⁷⁸ "To Draft Utilities Bill: Seth Low Appoints Committee of the Civic Federation," *New-York Tribune*, June 24, 1911.

⁴⁷⁹ "Sherman Law Change: Seth Low Drawing Bill to Have Amendments Introduced at Present Session of Congress," *New-York Tribune*, December 15, 1908, 4.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ This bill became the Clayton Antitrust Act in 1914. "Hepburn Bill: To Amend the Sherman Anti-Trust Law Further Explained by Civic Federation Head," *Courier-Journal*, March 29, 1908, 8.

⁴⁸² National Civic Federation, *Proceedings: Annual Meeting, Volume 12* (New York: National Civic Federation, 1912), iii.

responsibilities.”⁴⁸³ In 1916, Low’s presidency ultimately transferred to another Columbia student and trustee, Valentine Everit Macy.⁴⁸⁴

This final engagement of a long career reaffirms Low’s momentum toward the model of corporate liberalism that had developed since 1881, when he first embraced the social sciences as a mode of reform through which to assuage class conflict. An evaluation of Low’s success in cementing his administrative strategy across multiple institutions warrants only one benchmark: the goals articulated by this “untiring servant of the highest public interest governance” himself.⁴⁸⁵ In 1888, Low composed “An American View of Municipal Government in the United States,” as a chapter in British jurist James Bryce’s *The American Commonwealth*; the chapter offers an opportunity to appraise Low’s experience against his ideal of governance.⁴⁸⁶

Low’s comments on “the art of government” map onto his own agenda, announcing that he achieved his administrative ambitions.⁴⁸⁷ The “urban population has been called upon, without any qualifying experience,” he wrote, “to solve the difficult problems of city government.”⁴⁸⁸ So too did inexperience characterize Low himself, when he shouldered the Brooklyn mayoralty and joined the Columbia University board with a background in ancient oratory and his father’s business firm. Low also met the task, noted in his chapter, to “transfer himself, if he can, to a point of view precisely the opposite of that which is natural to him” as he both approached these early administrations and paired learning at Columbia with German

⁴⁸³ Italics added for emphasis. Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, 38-39.

⁴⁸⁴ “Macy Succeeds Seth Low,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, October 21, 1916.

⁴⁸⁵ Nicholas Murray Butler, “Honorary Degrees Address,” 1914.

⁴⁸⁶ At Low’s invitation, James Bryce spoke to Columbia students in 1890. The first edition of this text was published in 1888. Low revised his chapter for the 1910 publication. The most conspicuous difference between these two editions of the chapter is the increasing ambiguity of Low’s rhetoric, suggesting increasing shrewdness in evading controversial questions as he advanced through his administrations.

⁴⁸⁷ Seth Low, “An American View of Municipal Government,” in James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (1888), 586.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 590.

tenets.⁴⁸⁹ He responded to his conviction that “probably Berlin alone, among the great cities of Europe, is as well lighted as New York,” by implementing the German ideology of social science in the university, city classrooms, and offices of civic governance.⁴⁹⁰ As he constructed cabinets in each administration, Low answered his chapter’s applause for “the town meeting, in which every citizen takes part,” as well as its call to “examine very carefully the whole system of accounting” to make administration efficient and the goals of social reform possible.⁴⁹¹ By printing campaign pamphlets in foreign languages and attending affinity group meetings, Low addressed the growing immigrant population that the chapter identifies as crucial to the crescendo of class politics.⁴⁹² Through his service on the Board of Trustees of the historically black Tuskegee Institute, moreover, Low sought to apply this “art of government” to Americans with muffled voices.⁴⁹³

These consistent approaches across institutions articulate what strategic Seth Low did not say: New Yorkers at the turn of the twentieth century could not govern themselves. “Hearty cooperation” cried out for an advocate.⁴⁹⁴ When its advocate passed away in 1916, newspapers reported that St. George’s Church spilled onto the streets, as “financiers, public officials, and educators mingled with labor leaders.”⁴⁹⁵ In preparing a generation to participate in public service, Seth Low saw an opportunity to reposition the relationship between a corporate elite and

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 586-6.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 588.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 590. “Seth Low Praises Work: Ex-Mayor Pleased with His Visit to Tuskegee,” *New-York Tribune*, January 31, 1907.

⁴⁹² Seth Low, “An American View of Municipal Government,” in James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (1888), 586.

⁴⁹³ “Seth Low Praises Work: Ex-Mayor Pleased with His Visit to Tuskegee,” *New-York Tribune*, January 31, 1907.

⁴⁹⁴ This language selected by Seth Low was picked up by Weinstein when he discussed the corporate liberalism of the 1900s; Weinstein wrote, “this new liberalism of the Progressive Era put its emphasis on cooperation and social responsibility.” Seth Low, “Presidential Address,” 1912 in National Civic Federation. *Proceedings: Annual Meeting, Volume 12* (New York: National Civic Federation, 1912), 24. Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, xi.

⁴⁹⁵ “Men of All Ranks at Seth Low’s Bier,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1916, 11.

an evolving population of New Yorkers and, thereby, to create a chance for democracy in twentieth century Gotham. Writing the value of “cooperation” into curricula, Low urged, “it adds dignity to the cause itself that you should be here and take part.”⁴⁹⁶

To show up, to participate, to “be here and take part”—this was the lesson of Seth Low. This man’s career may remind us that all Americans do not receive the “dignity” that he celebrated as a product of such public service and participation at the polls. Female, African-American, Jewish, and immigrant—to name only a few—New Yorkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may have contested the historiography’s insistence on Low’s repute as “The Great Harmonizer.”⁴⁹⁷ Nonetheless, if his corporate liberal ideology did not provide all the tools necessary to meet an age of electronic ballots, email, or overseas consulting companies, Seth Low still speaks to New York of 2019. He advises a city that storms the sidewalks of Times Square and midtown towers:

Those who are students of the problems of city government in the United States are by no means discouraged. They find, indeed, in the interview under review, much more ground for encouragement than for loss of courage.⁴⁹⁸

By offering his models of learning and legislation, Seth Low continues to call for connections through strikes and through study, especially when governance demands change and ballots offer “ground for encouragement.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁹⁷ McCaughey, *Stand Columbia*, 178.

⁴⁹⁸ Seth Low, “An American View of Municipal Government,” in James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* Liberty Fund, ed. Vol. 1. (Indianapolis, 1888), 604.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

 Appendix

SETH LOW AS A STUDENT

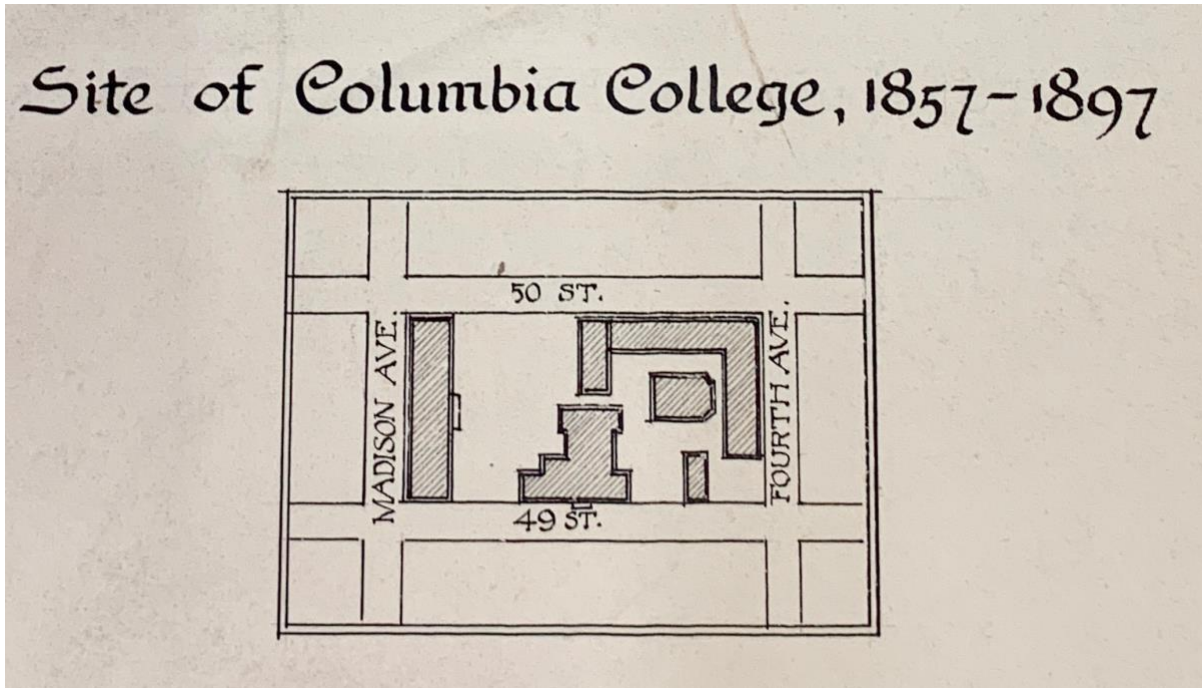


Figure One: The Columbia campus known by Seth Low as an undergraduate.

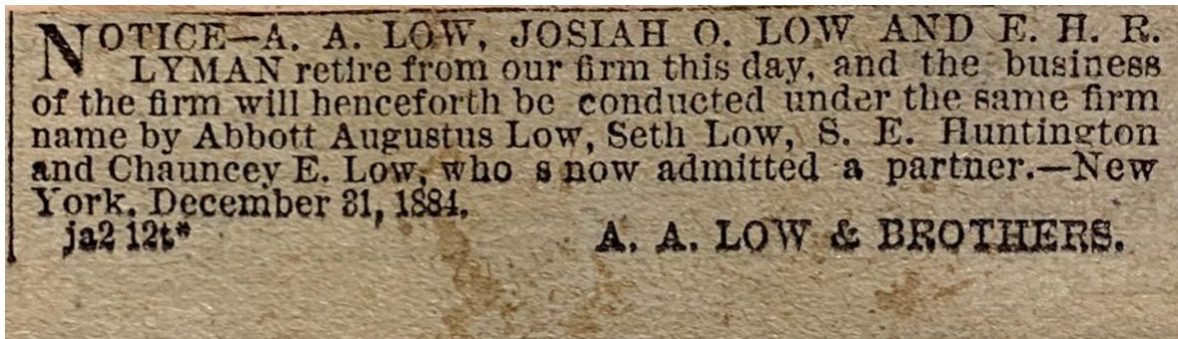


Figure Two: The newspaper advertisement announcing that Seth Low and his brothers would lead A. A. Low & Brothers, the family business that educated Low in efficiency after his Columbia graduation. Its 1884 date suggests that Low continued a businessman's work even during his Brooklyn mayoralty.

⁵⁰⁰ "Site of Columbia College, 1857-1897." Call Number #0180. Maps and Campus Plan Collection Series IV: Buildings and Grounds 1773-1971. UA Map case: Drawer 5, f.11. Flat Files Collection, Stack 14. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

⁵⁰¹ Undocumented newspaper advertisement, "Low Family Scrapbook." 1834-1875. New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts, New York, NY.

SETH LOW AS COLUMBIA TRUSTEE

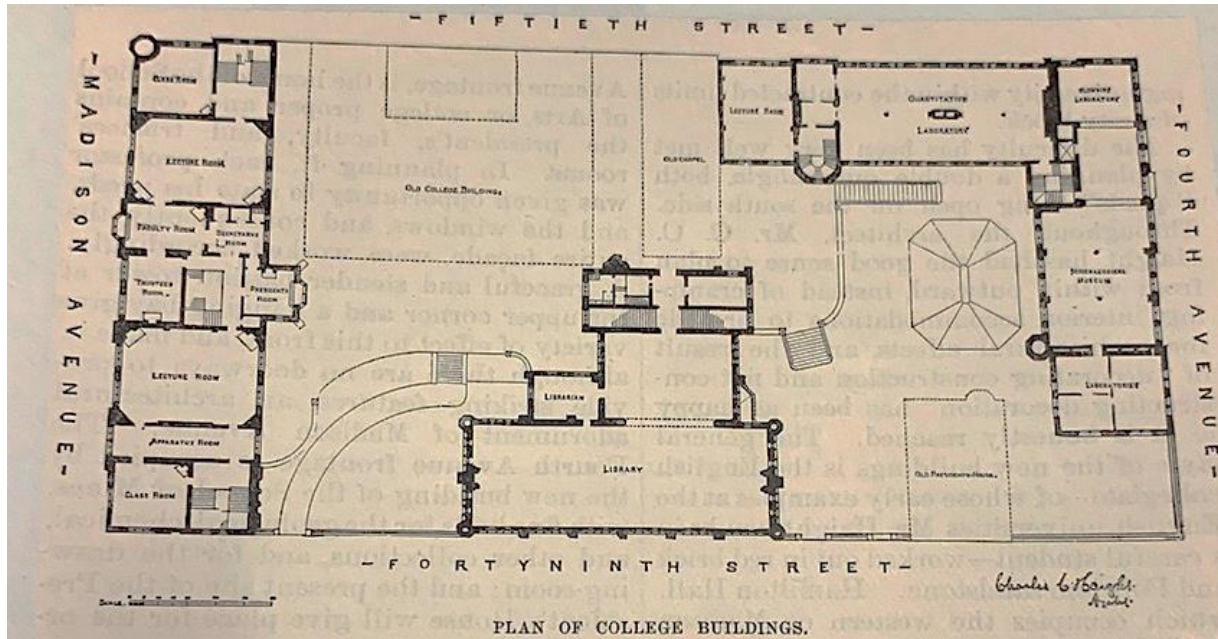


Figure Three: The Columbia campus in 1884, during Low’s early service on the Board of Trustees.

Course of Study in the Columbia School of Political Science, 1880-1887⁵⁰³

First Year, First Term

Course	Instructor	Hours per Week
Physical and Political Geography Ethnology and General Political and Constitutional History of England to 1688	Burgess	4
Political and Constitutional History of England to 1688	Mayo-Smith	2
Political Economy: History of Politico-Economic Institutions	Mayo-Smith	2
Philosophy: History of Political Theories from Plato to Hegel	Alexander	3
Bibliography of the Political Sciences	Rice (until 1883, then Baker)	3

⁵⁰² “Plan of Columbia College Buildings, 1884,” Buildings and Grounds Box 1, Folder 2, Series 1: Campus: 49th Street, 1800s-1980s. RBML.

⁵⁰³ Hoxie, *A History of the Faculty of Political Science*, 305-306.

First Year, Second Term

Course	Instructor	Hours per Week
Political and Constitutional History of the United States	Burgess	4
Political and Constitutional History of England since 1688	Mayo-Smith	2
Political Economy: Taxation and Finance	Mayo-Smith	2
Philosophy: History of Political Theories from Plato to Hegel	Alexander	3
Bibliography of the Political Sciences	Rice and Baker	1

Second Year, First Term

Course	Instructor	Hours per Week
History of Roman Law, to the present day	Munroe Smith	6
Comparative Constitutional Law of the Principal European States and of the United States	Burgess	3
Statistical Science, Methods and Results	Mayo-Smith	2

Second Year, Second Term

Course	Instructor	Hours per Week
Comparative Jurisprudence of the Principal European Systems of Civil Law	Munroe Smith	6
Comparative Constitutional Law of the Several Commonwealths of the American Union	Burgess	3
Statistical Science, Methods and Results	Mayo-Smith	2

Third Year, First Term

Course	Instructor	Hours per Week
History of Diplomacy	Burgess	2
Private International Law	Munroe Smith	1

Comparative Administrative Law of the Principal States of Europe and of the United States	Batman (died 1883, succeeded by Goodnow)	5
Social Sciences: Communistic and Socialistic Theories	Mayo-Smith	2

Third Year, Second Term

Course	Instructor	Hours per Week
Public International Law	Burgess	2
Private International Law	Munroe Smith	1
Comparative Administrative Law of the Several Commonwealths of the American Union	Bateman (Goodnow after his death)	5
Social Sciences: Communistic and Socialistic Theories	Mayo-Smith	2

SETH LOW AS BROOKLYN MAYOR

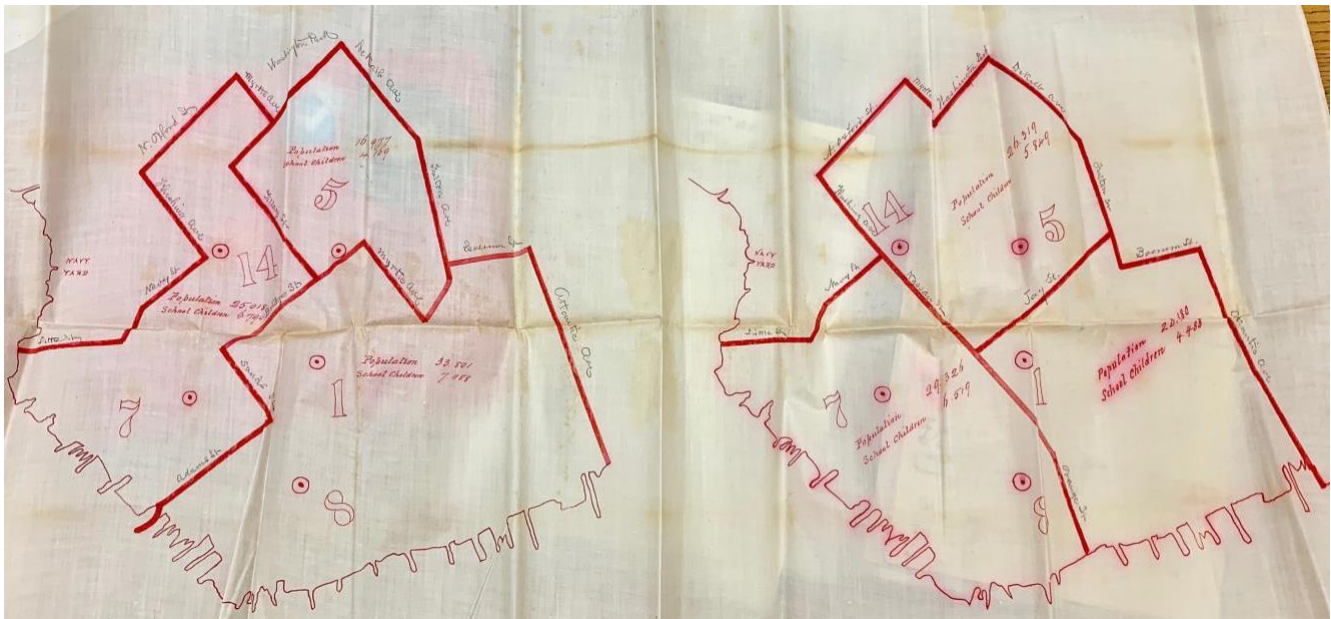


Figure Four: This map conveys Low’s Brooklyn administration’s interest in determining ratios of schoolchildren to population per district.

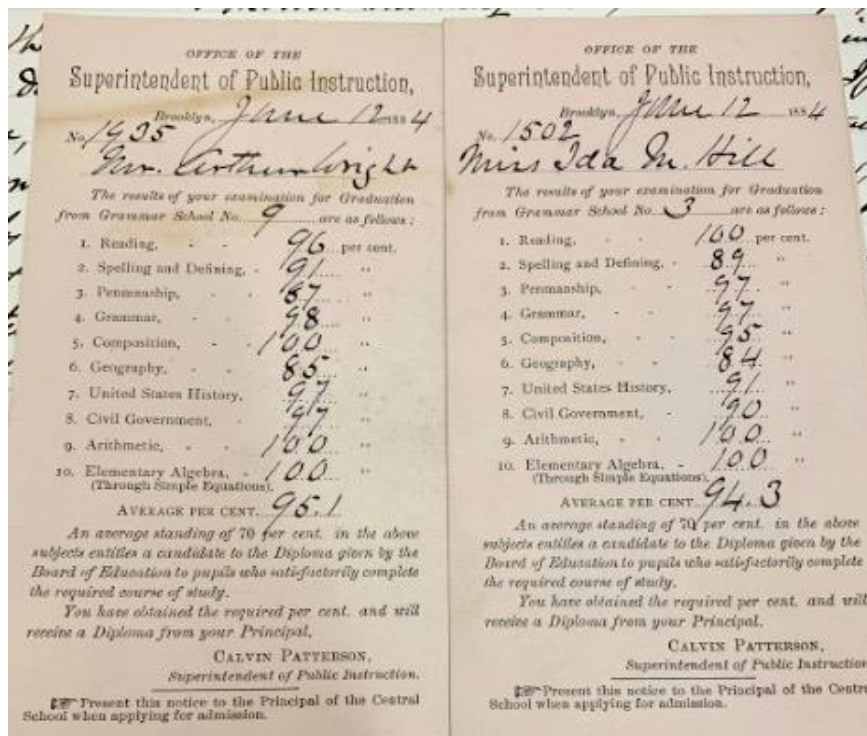


Figure Five: During Low’s mayoral administration, children in Brooklyn were required to pass a course in “Civil Government,” as shown on this sample exam.

⁵⁰⁴ Superintendent of Public Instruction, “The Exam to Graduate Grammar School,” 1884. Ms Coll Low. Box 163: Brooklyn Board of Education #3. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

B. U. R. C.

October 20th, 1883.

TO THE WOMEN OF BROOKLYN:

If the law of New York has not yet conferred upon you the power to vote, the *United State's* law gives you control of the voter.

REGISTER YOUR VOTER NEXT MONDAY!

The throne in this country is man's vote; the power behind the throne is woman.

REGISTER YOUR MAN NEXT MONDAY!

Our forefathers fought for the principle, "No taxation without representation." Will not our mothers who are taxed insist upon a representation at the polls? Your sex has been accused of curiosity; for once deserve the imputation; find out if your representative has shirked his duty. If he has, assert your prerogative, and send him to the place of registration. Go with him if necessary.

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Figure Six: Seth Low's Brooklyn reelection campaign in 1883 recognized women as political actors.

WANTED—SITUATION—FEMALES.	WANTED—SITUATIONS—FEMALES.
<p style="text-align: center;">Cooks, Washers and Ironers.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, washer and ironer, by a German girl; city reference can be given. Please call for two days at 494 Adelphi st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, washer and ironer, by a respectable woman; has good city references. Call for two days at 90 Atlantic av.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, washer and ironer or light housework. Please call for two days at her last employer's, 2 Second place.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, by a respectable girl; also willing to wash, iron and do general housework; no objection to the country or a boarding house. Apply at 25 Front st, first floor.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, washer and ironer, or to do general housework, by a respectable woman; good city reference. Please call for two days at 24 Carroll st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, washer and ironer, by a respectable English woman; would go out to work by the day; has good city references. Call for two days at 215 Navy st, first floor.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, washer and ironer, or to do general housework in a small family, by a respectable young colored girl; has good city references. Call for two days at 504 Waverly av.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK, by a respectable woman; no objection to assist in the washing and ironing. Can be seen for two days at her present employer's, 34 Tompkins place.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK and laundress, by a respectable woman; no objection to general housework; city or country; best city reference. Call for two days, at 187 Twenty-third st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A COOK in a private family, by a respectable girl; no objection to the country; or would do housework; best of reference from last employer. Call for two days at No. 109 Harrison st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—AS A GOOD</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">General Housework.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—TO DO THE housework by a respectable young girl; willing and obliging; good reference. Please call for two days at 49 Schermerhorn st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—TO DO THE housework, or would do upstairs work, by a respectable girl; has reference; will be found willing and obliging; no objection to city or country. Please call for two days at 75 Pacific st, near Henry.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—TO DO LIGHT housework, in an English or American family preferred, by a young girl lately landed. Call for two days at 368 Atlantic av, in the laundry.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—TO DO THE housework in a small private family, by a respectable young girl; is a good cook, washer and ironer; is willing and obliging; city reference. Please call for two days at 147 Degraw st, in the store.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—TO DO THE housework in a small family, by a respectable young girl, willing and obliging, and willing to assist with children; is a good plain cook, washer and ironer. Please call for two days at 152 Johnson st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—TO DO THE housework in a small private family, or would do upstairs work, by a respectable young girl, lately landed. Please call for two days at 111 Tillary st, between Lawrence and Jay; no postal cards answered.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—IN A NICE family, by a respectable German girl. Please call at 115 Concord st.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATION—BY A RES-pectable young girl, who is willing and obliging. Please call for two days at 253 Greeno av, between Grand and Olsson.</p> <p>WANTED—SITUATIONS—ONE TO DO general housework, is a good plain cook and excellent laundress; and the other to do upstairs work, by two of 2 sisters, used in one house two years; reference. Call for two days at 595 Quiny st.</p>

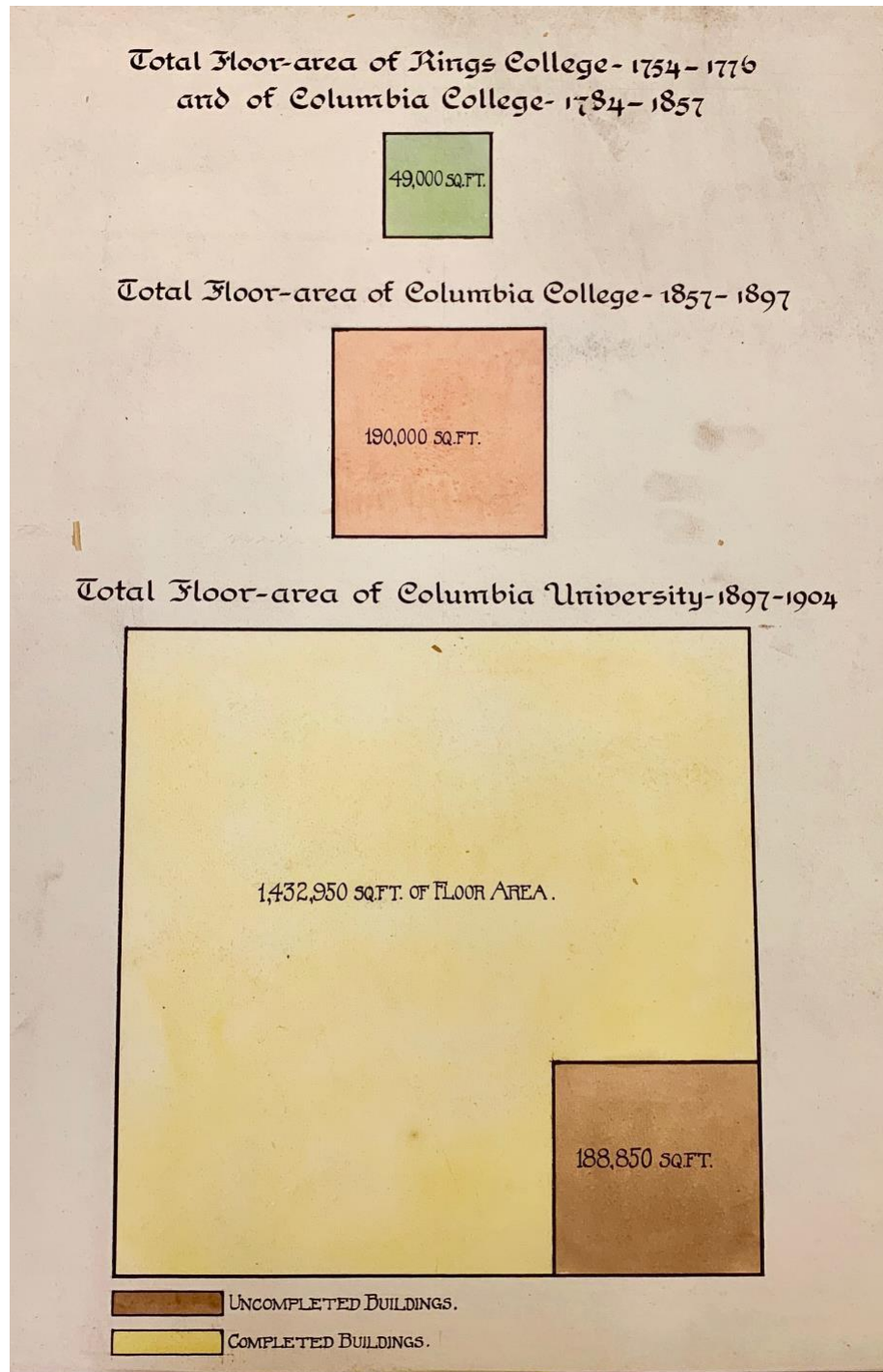
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Figure Seven: Despite women's entrance into social science spheres, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* still called upon women as cooks and laundresses.

⁵⁰⁵ Flyer urging women to register their husbands to vote, Monday October 22, 1883. Ms Coll Low. Scrapbook 3: 1883 Re-Election Campaign. Seth Low Papers, 1870-1930. RBML.

⁵⁰⁶ "Wanted—Help—Females," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 8, 1884, 3.

SETH LOW AS COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT



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Figure Eight: This area comparison demonstrates Low's centrality to Columbia's growth.

⁵⁰⁷ Total Area Comparisons. Call Number #0180. Stack 14. UA Map case: Drawer 5, f.11. Maps and Campus Plan Collection Series IV: Buildings and Grounds 1773-1971. Flat Files Collection, Columbia University Archives. RBML.

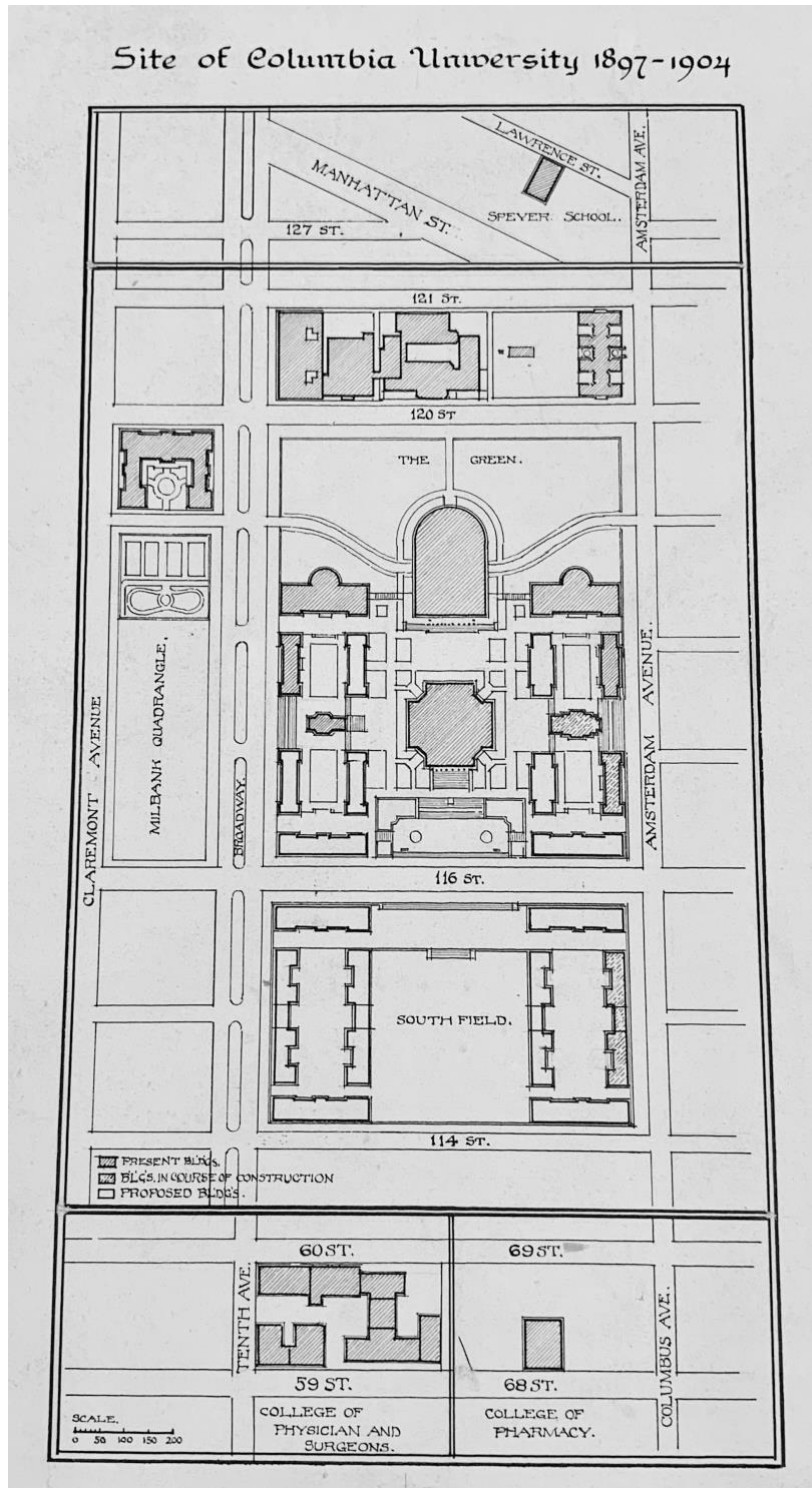


Figure Nine: The Columbia University campus born under Low’s leadership.

⁵⁰⁸ “Site of Columbia University, 1897-1904,” Call Number #0180. UA Map case: Drawer 5, f.11. Maps and Campus Plan Collection Series IV: Buildings and Grounds 1773-1971. Flat Files Collection, Stack 14. Columbia University Archives. RBML.

SETH LOW AS NEW YORK CITY MAYOR

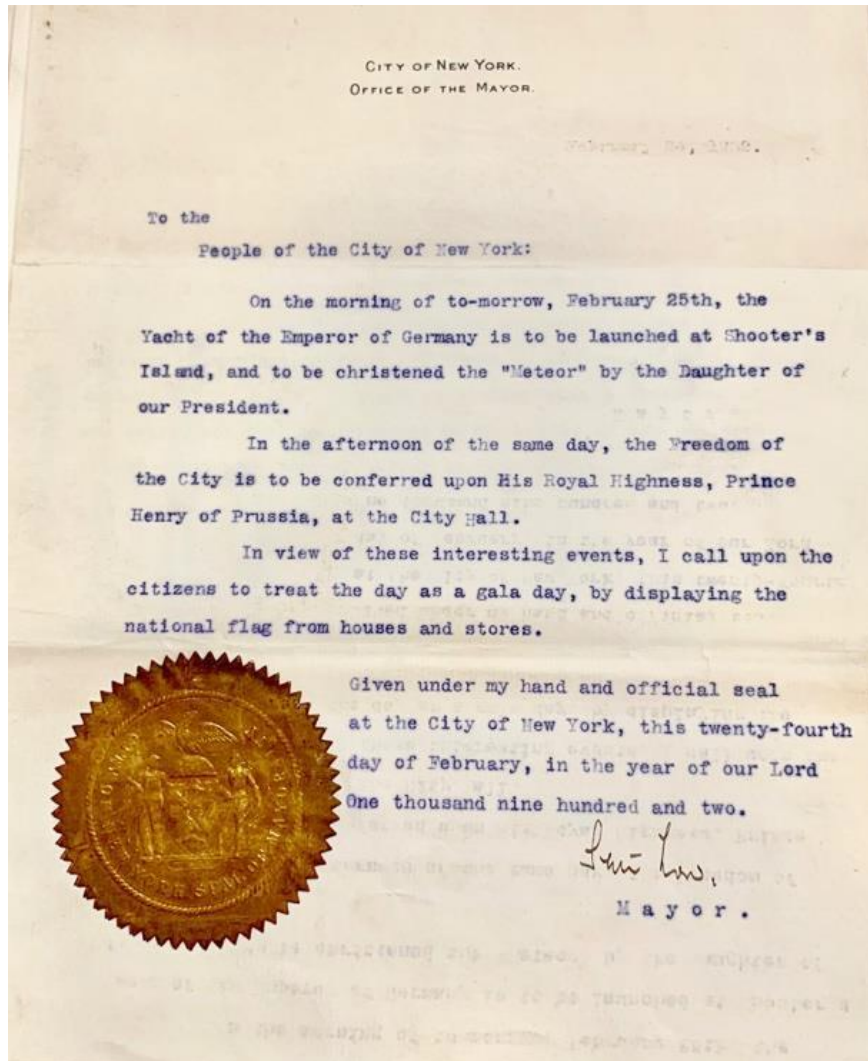


Figure Ten: Found at the New York City Municipal Archives, this correspondence captured the intersections of Low's administrations as it discusses the Emperor of Germany's visit to New York City.

⁵⁰⁹ Seth Low to the People of the City of New York, February 24, 1902. Box 5, Folder #49: "Mayor's Office." Series I: Departmental Correspondence Received, 1902-1903. New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY.

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