

HISTORY OF PRATT

On October 17, 1887, 12 young people climbed the stairs of the new “Main” building and began to fulfill the dream of Charles Pratt as the first students at Pratt Institute.

Charles Pratt, one of 11 children, was born the son of a Massachusetts carpenter in 1830. In Boston, he joined a company specializing in paints and whale oil products. When he came to New York, he founded a petroleum business that would become Charles Pratt and Company. The company eventually merged with Standard Oil, the company that made John D. Rockefeller his millions.

Pratt’s fortunes increased and he became a leading figure in Brooklyn, serving his community and his profession. A philanthropist and visionary, he supported many of Brooklyn’s major institutions. He always regretted, however, his own limited education and dreamed of founding an institution where pupils could learn trades through the skillful use of their hands. This dream was realized when Pratt Institute opened its doors more than 130 years ago. To this day, members of the Pratt family are leading supporters of the Institute.

Today, Pratt offers students more than 25 undergraduate majors and concentrations—more than most other art and design schools in the country—and more than 25 master’s degree programs.

The energy, foresight, and spirit Charles Pratt gave to his dream remain even today. Inscribed on the seal of the Institute is his motto: Be True to Your Work, and Your Work Will Be True to You.