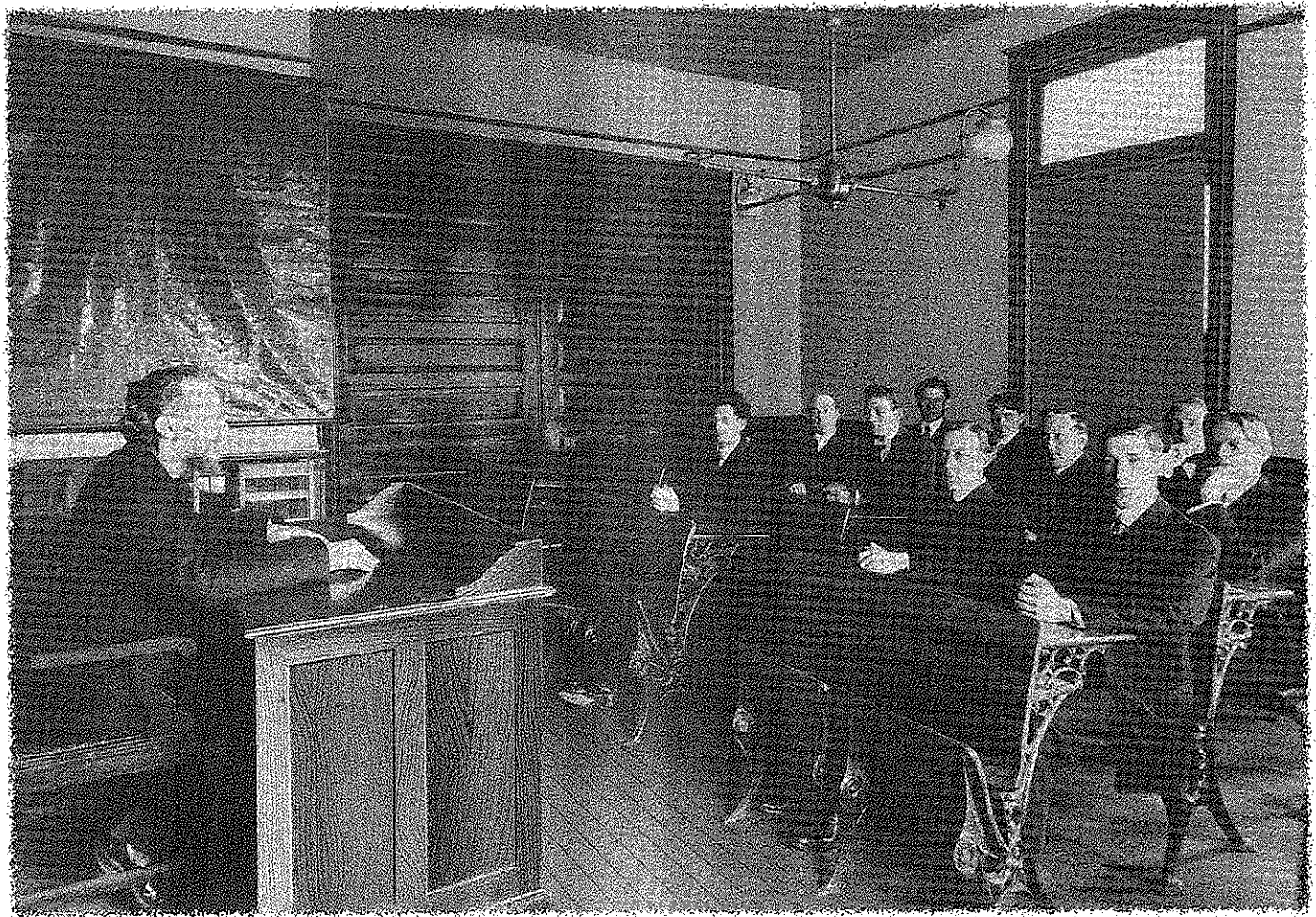


Origins

Historical Magazine of The Archives
Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary
Volume XIX • Number 1 • 2001



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*Historical Magazine
of The Archives*

Calvin College and
Calvin Theological Seminary
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Origins is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of *The Archives*. These goals include the gathering, organization, and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian Reformed Church, its institutions, communities, and people.

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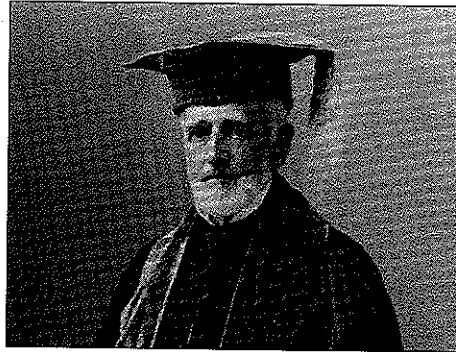
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Professor P.M. Ten Hoor and class at
Calvin Theological Seminary, c.1910.
Photo: Archives, Calvin College.



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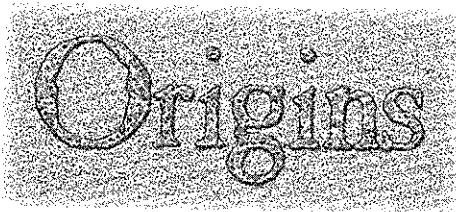
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This Issue

One of the tasks to which the Dutch Calvinists who came to America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were dedicated was educating their youth. This issue examines most of the institutions of higher learning that were operated in this immigrant community between 1847 and 1947. Of course, a number of fine such institutions have been organized since 1947, but, due to space, we were limited in what we could include. We selected those from the one hundred years following the arrival of the Van Raalte and Scholte groups because this time frame provided the eight articles that follow. Only Chicago Christian College, which operated during the 1930s, is missing, but a paper about this institution will be presented at the AADAS Conference this June, to be held on the Calvin campus.☪

Newsletter

Beginning with this issue, you will notice a slight change in the format of *Origins*. Henry Ippel, long-serving editor of the Newsletter, has asked to be relieved of this task. Those of you familiar with the newsletter know the great amount of work he did as editor for the past 15 years, all after retiring from the faculty of Calvin College. He

continues to volunteer his services to Heritage Hall for which we are most grateful, as we are for his work in building the program and its publications. Thank you Henry.

Since some of the articles that appeared in the Newsletter were similar to what is included in *Origins*, we concluded to begin this column rather than find a new editor. Instead, we will provide comments from readers and reports from the Archives in this space and include the other items as articles.☪

Origins Index Available

One of the new features available on a component of the Heritage Hall website (<http://www.calvin.edu/hh/origins.htm>) is a subject index to *Origins*. We will update this index regularly and encourage you to use it when looking for past stories.☪

News from the Archives

The newly translated CRC Classical/General Assembly (later known as Synod) sets of minutes, 1857-1870, as well as the 1924 CRC synodical minutes were completed and are available in a digital format. With significant assistance from Greg Sennema, of the Hekman Library, all cataloging data was streamed from MicroMARC:AMC into Dynix. We are now in the process of editing all these data. Once completed, access to the data will be via the catalog available via the library's homepage.

Often-used pictorials have been converted into digital formats to facilitate access and lessen the cost of

reproduction. In conjunction with the 125th anniversaries of the college and seminary, we are working with the Hekman Library staff in a pilot project to copy documents, pictorials and sound recordings having to do with the histories of the institutions to digital formats. The images are now available for viewing at <http://www.calvin.edu/library/125th/about.stm>. Textual documents will follow.

The 125th anniversary celebration of the college and seminary has taken much of our staff time. Staff served on both institutions' committees. In addition, Richard Harms oversaw the writing and production (as well as writing one chapter) of *Love Beyond Knowledge, Grace Beyond Imagination*, a 125th history of both institutions. He lectured in the seminary 125th lecture series and will be chairing a conference for the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies in June 2001.☪

New Collections

Official minutes of seventy Christian Reformed churches and three Christian school organizations were received and microfilmed. We have begun organizing the records of the seminary and are currently working on the papers of the individual presidents. Due to research use, we have also begun doing similar work with the denominational collection. Sixteen manuscript collections were organized, inventoried and opened for research, including the records of CRC World Missions, CRC Home Missions, CRC

classical records and the records of the Calvin College Sociology Department.☪

Staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary and the CRCNA, overseeing the holdings of Heritage Hall, located at Calvin College, and editing *Origins*.

Departmental assistants in Heritage Hall are Wendy Blankespoor and Boukje Leegwater and Betsy Verduin. Dr. Robert Bolt is the field agent for the Historical Committee of the CRCNA. Hendrina Van Spronsen continues as office manager and business manager for *Origins*. Student assistants are Heather Bosma and Susan Potter.

We are particularly grateful to our volunteers whose gifts to us have inestimable value. These individuals are: Floyd Antonides, Henry DeMots, Ed Gerritsen, Fred Greidanus, Hendrick Harms, Henry Ippel, John Knight, Helen Meulink, Bill Nawyn, Janice Overzet, Gerrit Sheeres, Ed Start, Leonard Sweetman, and Cornelius Van Duyn.☪

Endowment Fund

The Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund had a January 2001 balance of \$293,119, an increase of \$13,907 (5 percent) from the previous January. Proceeds from this fund were used to publish *Origins*. Due to the financial uncertainties at present, we have no new projects planned at this point. We are pleased to report that

the sales of the Lucas book, *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs*, have surpassed the purchase cost by several hundred dollars and those surplus funds were added to the endowment. Thank you to all who began supporting and to those who continue to support our efforts. All are recognized on the inside cover.☪

AADAS Conference at Calvin

The 13th biennial conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch-American Studies will be held June 22-23, 2001 on the Calvin campus. Speakers from the Netherlands and the United States will talk about the Dutch impressions of North America, immigrant acculturation, Christian college, and Dutch Roman Catholic immigrants. The keynote speaker is Dr. Robert Swierenga who will review the current status of Dutch-American scholarship.☪

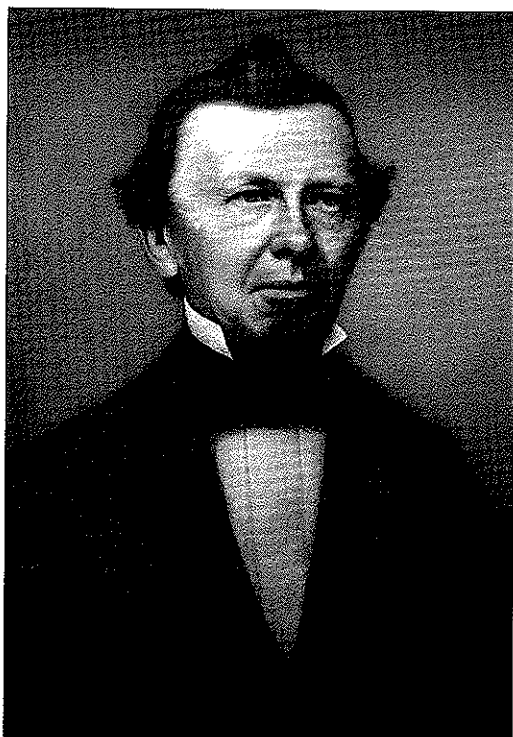


Richard H. Harms

Hope College: Its Origin and Development, 1851–2001

Elton J. Bruins

Hope College was incorporated in 1866 when it graduated its first class of eight students. There were also at least two major influences that inspired and supported a vision of higher education in the Holland



Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte, leader of the Holland Colony and founder, benefactor and supporter of Hope College. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

Colony.¹ Then in Holland, Michigan there were attempts to establish some form of higher education that led to the founding of Hope College. To understand the origins of Hope College one needs to look at and understand these influences.

The first primary influence was the *Afscheiding*, or Separation of 1834 in the Netherlands, at which time pious Calvinistic Christians left the Hervormde Kerk

(state church) under the leadership of Rev. Hendrik de Cock of Ulrum, a village in the Province of Groningen. De Cock was joined by other pastors in the Separatist movement, which soon gained considerable momentum. One of the reasons for that separation was to establish Christian schools. The public schools were gradually undergoing a secularizing process due to the impact of the Enlightenment and were

less concerned with the Christian dimension of education than previously. Consequently, public schools could no longer be counted on by the church as a way to educate students in the Christian faith.²

A decade later, the European mass movement to emigrate induced many of the Separatists to consider leaving the Netherlands. Two Separatist ministers, Rev. Hendrik P. Scholte and Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte, became leaders of the many Netherlanders, mainly Separatists, who decided to go to America. Van Raalte established the Holland Colony in Michigan in February 1847, and Scholte established Pella, Iowa, that summer. They carried with them the strong desire for schools where children could learn about the Christian faith as well as gain academic knowledge.

Another source for the inspiration to found Hope College was the union of the Classis of Holland with the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, which in 1867 took the name Reformed Church in America (RCA).³ Classis Holland was comprised of a number of churches founded in the Holland Colony in 1847, many by Van Raalte himself, including his own congregation, the First Reformed Church in Holland.⁴ Leaders in the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in New York City and Albany, who had taken an interest in Van Raalte and his people when they landed on the east coast in the fall of 1846, invited these churches to unite with the their Reformed Church, a denomination founded in 1628, only nine years after the conclusion of the Synod of Dort.

Elton J. Bruins has a PhD from New York University and is the Blekkink Professor of Religion emeritus and director of the Van Raalte Institute at Hope College. A published scholar, he is also an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America.

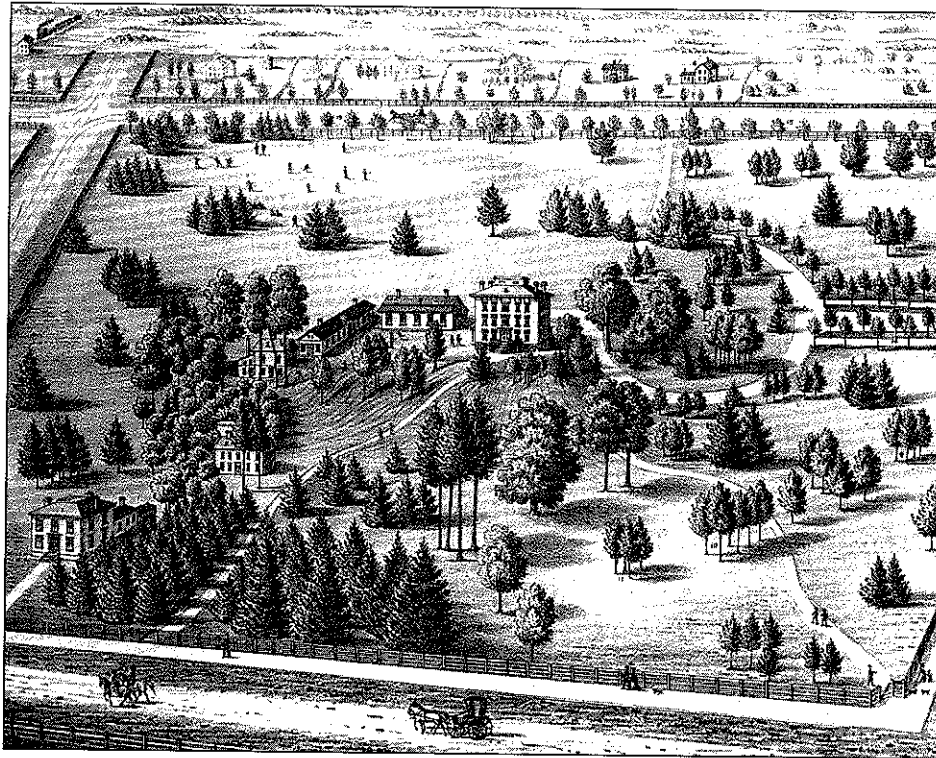
The denomination, primarily located in the East, was already establishing congregations in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

With Van Raalte's impetus Classis Holland united with the denomination in 1850. Whereupon the denomination realized it needed an institution of higher learning "in the West."⁵ The urge of the Separatists to have Christian schools melded with the interests of the Reformed Church

to establish a western collegiate institution with particular interest in training candidates for the ministry.

In 1851 Classis Holland, now part of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church moved to establish a school for higher education, educationally comparable to today's high school level.⁶ Up to this time, due to extreme poverty, the immigrants in Holland had opted for public schools as the only possible way to have any education at all for its children. The district (public) schools, although funded by public taxes, were, in effect, quasi-Christian schools. The teachers taught the children to sing the psalms, and catechetical training was done in the schools by the elders of the churches.⁷ There was still a desire to have Christian day schools but Van Raalte was not able to get one started until his home congregation, commonly called Pillar Church, began its school in 1857.⁸

The 1851 instruction began in



Hope College campus, c.1875. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

October in conjunction with the district school but under the governance of the church. The new endeavor was named the Pioneer School with Walter T. Taylor from Geneva, New York, as the first instructor. To his report to the Board of Education of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church at the end of the first academic year describing the great difficulties of his job, he appended Van Raalte's oft-quoted statement: "This is my anchor of Hope for this people in the future."⁹

The General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church took the school under its wing in 1853. Soon separated from the district school, the Pioneer School was located on five acres near the center of the village donated by Van Raalte. Some graduates of the Pioneer School went on to Rutgers College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the sole college of the Reformed Church, for their collegiate education.

Principals of the Pioneer School

and its 1857 successor, the Holland Academy,¹⁰ came and went. Taylor served three years (1851-54), Frederick P. Beidler one year (1854-55), and John Van Vleck four years (1855-59). Not until Rev. Philip Phelps Jr. accepted the call in 1859 to leave his pastorate in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, to come did the Holland Academy acquire some stability. Van Raalte and Phelps became close friends and collaborators in the cause of Christian

higher education in western Michigan.

As more churches were being founded by Dutch immigrants throughout the Middle West, they often called pastors from the Netherlands, but few were willing to come to serve these immigrant congregations. The Van Raalte and Phelps friendship was crucial for fostering higher education, particularly for the training of young men for the ministry to serve these new congregations.

The young enterprise of higher education needed funds badly, so Van Raalte assumed the fund-raising efforts. He made trips of considerable length to the East in 1857 and 1859-60, the latter of three months duration, to raise money to construct the four-story academy building which eventually was named for Van Vleck and now serves Hope College as a residence for women. The building was completed in 1858. It housed the principal and his family, the students who boarded with the school, the

classrooms, and the library. In 1860 Van Raalte gave more property, thus enlarging the campus to sixteen acres.

The terrible civil conflict that engulfed the United States beginning in 1861 did not limit the efforts of Van Raalte and Phelps to get college education underway. Phelps recruited the first class for college instruction, which began in 1862. The General Synod of the denomination endorsed the idea and promised support for the additional teachers needed. Phelps was totally engaged in the work, teaching full-time, serving with his wife as house parents, and also serving as a "missionary pastor" because part of his call was to establish an English-speaking congregation in the Holland Colony.¹¹ His primary concern, however, was to develop a college. He was a builder in every sense of the word: he and his students, with some help, literally built the first chapel/gymnasium in 1862.

Phelps's crowning achievement was to get the institution incorporated as Hope College in 1866, the year eight young men graduated.¹² Students no longer had to travel east to obtain their college education, although the students who wished to enter the ministry of the Reformed Church still had to go to New Brunswick, New Jersey, for their theological education, where the seminary of the Reformed Church was located across the street from the Rutgers College campus.

This prompted the next move on the part of Phelps and Van Raalte: to establish theological training at Hope College. Seven of the eight graduates in 1866 wished to enter the ministry and to receive their theological education at Hope College, not in New Jersey. Phelps was able to convince the denomination of the importance of this, and the General Synod agreed. That meant more instructors had to be called to serve at the college, professors who could teach at both the collegiate and

theological level. The enrollment for 1866-67 was not large but encouraging. Seven students were studying theology, nineteen were in the collegiate program, and thirty-eight in the academy, now called the Grammar School.

emy. The new colony failed to prosper, and Van Raalte's reputation suffered a serious set-back.

The largest problem that enveloped the young college in the later 1860s was Phelps's vision for the future of



The 1866 graduating class, all but W.A. Shields went on to theological study at what became Western Theological Seminary and served as ministers in the Reformed Church in America. Image: Joint Archives, Hope College.

The considerable success of Phelps and Van Raalte in establishing collegiate and theological education did not continue during the next decade, however. Van Raalte's contribution to the school began to diminish after 1866. In 1867, at age 56, he retired from his pastorate at the First Reformed Church. He suffered from health problems, and his primary interest turned to the development of a new Dutch-immigrant colony, this time in Amelia, Virginia. He, his wife, and their young daughters went there to live in 1869. They stayed less than six months, but three congregations composed of new Dutch immigrants were organized along with an acad-

the school. He saw developing the college into a university. Since it already had theological education, all that was needed was to add schools of law and medicine. The name he chose was Hope Haven University to be located on the north side of Lake Macatawa, then called Black Lake. The college purchased 800 acres of land there for a new campus at a cost of \$10,000. James Suydam, a great friend and supporter, supplied most of the funds. Much of the acreage was to be farmed with the income supporting the university.

Had adequate financing been available, this vision for Hope's future would have been considered as

inspired, but it proved to be completely impractical and even imperiled the future of the college. The college was already suffering financial woes when Phelps proposed the idea of a university. The faculty, consisting of T. Romeyn Beck, Cornelius Crispell, and Charles Scott, was totally opposed to the idea, partly due, no doubt, to their not having received all the salary that had been promised them.

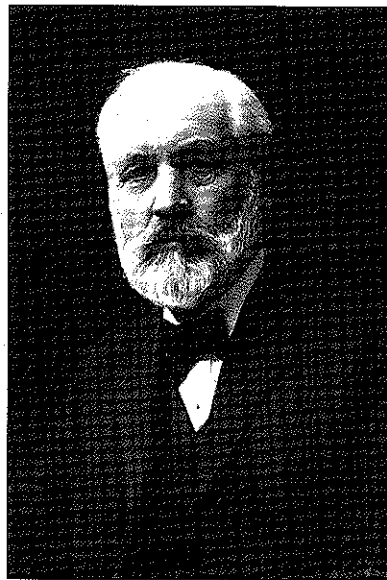
Further, the denomination was getting weary of the unceasing calls for more funds from Van Raalte and Phelps. Some leading pastors in the denomination in the East felt that no theological education was needed in the West at all noting that New Brunswick Seminary was fully adequate to provide a theological education for all ministerial candidates in the Reformed Church.

Then came the disastrous Holland fire of 1871 which destroyed two-thirds of the village. Providentially it did not touch the campus, but the residents concentrated on rebuilding the community, rather than building a university. Just as damaging was the Panic of 1873 and the ensuing economic depression.

Certainly difficult for Phelps was the death of Van Raalte in 1876. Phelps now stood alone: unsupported by his friend and partner Van Raalte, he faced an alienated faculty and a denomination and major donors who were tired of being repeatedly asked for funds. The General Synod took drastic action and halted theological instruction at the college in 1877, much to the dismay of the Dutch-immigrant congregations in the West. The college's indebtedness of approximately \$29,000 included \$17,000 owed to the faculty. In 1878, the General Synod took more drastic action: it ordered the reorganization of the college and asked for the resignation of the president and the faculty. The General Synod claimed

that it was "necessary to sacrifice men for the institution."¹³ Beck, Crispell, and Scott were retained, but not Phelps in the presidency. The former president fought the action until 1886 when his two oldest children graduated.¹⁴ He then left Holland to serve two small congregations in upstate New York, which he served until his retirement.

Although his presidency ended on a sad note, no person, without exception, influenced the course of the college more than Philip Phelps Jr.



Gerrit J. Kollen, appointed president in 1893, had skills as an instructor, administrator and fund raiser. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

This recognized leader in the denomination, with serene countenance and charming personality, was a determined advocate for his vision for the college. He was much loved by the students and alumni as he loved the Reformed Church and Hope College. Under his direction, collegiate education of young women was established in the early 1870s.¹⁵ Inauguration of Hope's program of international education can be attributed to him, since he induced at least fourteen Japanese students to study at Hope during the 1870s. Students did not

have to meet a religious test for entrance to the school, although all students were expected to attend church weekly and chapel services daily as well as to conduct themselves with Christian deportment. He and Van Raalte fully endorsed the foreign missions movement which gained considerable momentum in the denomination during his tenure. In time, hundreds of Hope graduates became missionaries in various parts of the world.¹⁶ Happily, Phelps was invited to address the alumni of the college at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the institution in 1891.

An RCA pastor who remained in the East, Rev. G. Henry Mandeville, was appointed provisional president in 1878 by the General Synod for two years. His primary task was to raise money to eliminate the college indebtedness. Professor Charles Scott, the pillar of the faculty during the period of recovery, was named provisional president in 1880 and was assigned the task of picking up the pieces after Phelps. In 1885 he was named the college's second president. He pulled the school out of debt and was instrumental, along with Professor Gerrit J. Kollen, in raising the money for the building of Graves Hall/Winants Chapel, which was under construction by 1893. He did not live to see it finished because he died later that year. During his tenure, Phelps provided crucial and inestimable service to Hope College.

With the appointment of Gerrit J. Kollen in 1893 as the next president, Hope adopted the practice of having lay people serve as president. Kollen, a professor of mathematics at the time of his appointment, began teaching at Hope in 1871, three years after his college graduation. He had the gifts of teaching, administration, and fundraising, all of which were imbued with the vision of quality Christian higher education.

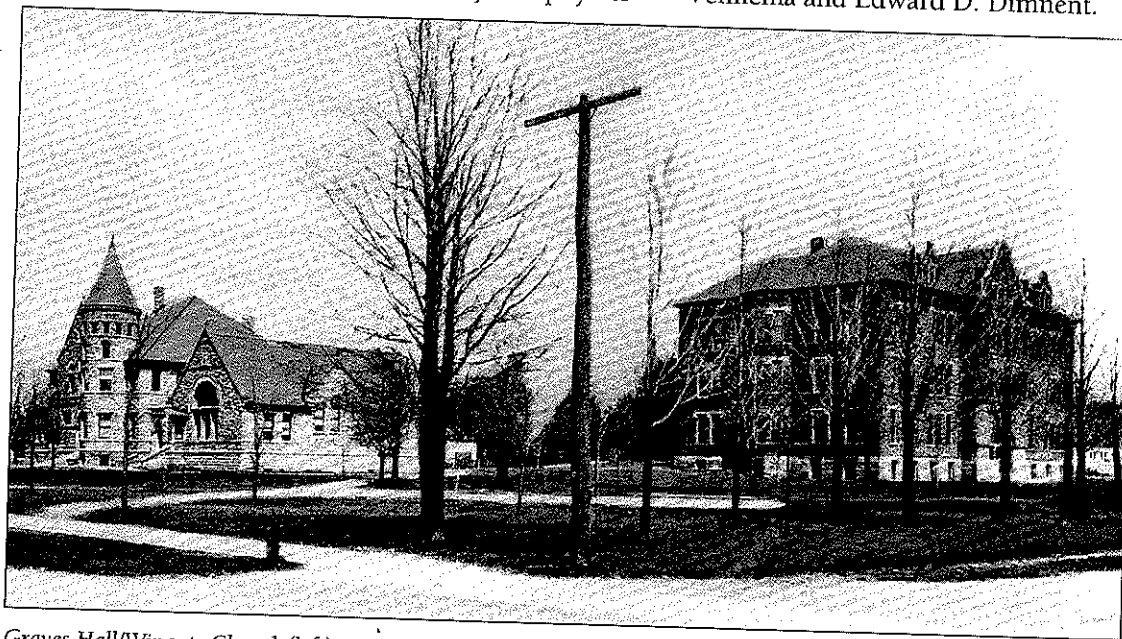
His excellent fund-raising skills were especially critical at that time. The college was constructing its second major building, but the campus needed more buildings and equipment if it was going to thrive in the twentieth century. In 1903 a major classroom building was dedicated and named Van Raalte Memorial Hall. Voorhees Hall, the first residence for women on the campus, was completed in 1907 with money provided by Ralph and Elizabeth Voorhees of New Jersey, who also endowed the chairs of Greek and Latin. Kollen's persuasive fund-raising skills reached their apex when he met Andrew Carnegie. Kollen was able to convince Carnegie to make an exception to his giving only for the construction of libraries and to provide the funds for building a gymnasium at Hope College. The new athletic facility and auditorium was completed in 1906 on the site of the old chapel/gym. This new building was crucial for the growing student interest in athletics.

Many other areas of the college's life were strengthened during Kollen's administration as well. The oratorical tradition, important since the inception of the college, was even more firmly established. Abraham J. Muste¹⁷ was a champion orator during the early part of the twentieth century, as was Guy Vander Jagt, a long-term congressman, later in the century. Another important tradition—intercollegiate athletics—took hold in spite of faculty opposition. This was in keeping with a tradition established by Rutgers and Princeton, who played the first intercollegiate football game in 1869 on the Rutgers campus.¹⁸

The science program received a boost under Kollen's leadership. He established a combined position in chemistry and physics immediately upon assuming the presidency. The position was divided in 1909 as the departments of chemistry and physics

of the music department, and for a time, Hope had its own school of music. The first drama—"Antigone"—was presented in 1904.

The next twenty years (1911-31) were under the leadership of Ame Vennema and Edward D. Dimment.



Graves Hall/Winants Chapel (left), 1893, and Van Raalte Hall, 1903, from an early twentieth century postcard. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

each had their own faculty. The first professor of biology was appointed in 1899. Many of the students attracted to the sciences went on to graduate work. Teacher-student research, which became a trademark of Hope's science program, was inaugurated by Dr. Almon T. Godfrey, the first full-time professor of chemistry, as he used students for laboratory assistants. With the 1903 construction of Van Raalte Memorial Hall, the college finally had a facility adequate to develop science education. It replaced a simple frame building near Van Vleck Hall.

A distinct education department was formed under Kollen's leadership because Hope was increasingly a provider of primary and secondary teachers. Music and drama were also given an impetus during this period. The efforts of a professor of English, John B. Nykerk, led to the founding

Vennema, a descendant from a pioneer Holland family, came to the college from a Reformed Church pastorate in the East. Vennema's administration was marked by the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the chartering of the college in 1866. His struggle, as it had been for his predecessors, was to raise the level of financial support from Reformed Church congregations, which were usually more interested in supporting the foreign mission movement than Christian higher education. Dimment came from the Hope faculty and the crowning achievement of his career was the building of the college chapel, which began in 1927 and was dedicated in 1929.¹⁹ This Gothic-style building, still the most imposing building on the campus, was renamed in his honor in 1959.

His successor, Wynand Wichers, former history professor turned

banker, led the college through the Great Depression and World War II. He was an active Reformed Church lay person, well-known in the Holland community, and viewed as being able to raise money and handle finances well. Financial savvy was vital because the Depression, with all its attendant problems, had already begun when he became the sixth president in 1931 with a considerable part of the college's small endowment in default.²⁰ In 1938, to cut costs, he closed the Hope Preparatory School, which had its origins in the Pioneer School and from which hundreds of students had graduated. He saw the need for a new science building and was able to raise the necessary funds. The building was dedicated in 1942.

College enrollment held steady until the United States entered the conflict in Europe. Enrollment dipped to 288 students by 1943, leaving some people to wonder about the future of the college. But the low enrollment was offset, in part, by the establishment of an Army Specialized Training Program, paid for by the federal government, which brought 258 young men to the campus. Not only did this program boost the economy of the college, but the presence of so many young men contributed to its social life.

In spite of all the obstacles Wichers faced, he had a very positive and hopeful

approach to his work. The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the college in 1941 was a gala event given wide publicity in the denominational paper. The theme of the celebration was "The Place of the Christian College in the World Today," and its highlight was the visit of Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. When Wichers left in 1945 to become vice-president at Western Michigan University, the college was looking forward to the dawning of a new day in the post-war years.

That new day, and the next twenty-five years, was led by two men who had already made their mark in higher education: Irwin J. Lubbers (1945-63) and Calvin A. Vander Werf (1963-70). Both were graduates of Hope College. Lubbers came to Hope from the presidency at Central College, which had been affiliated with the Reformed Church in America since 1916; Vander Werf, a distinguished scientist, came from the University of Kansas.

Both presidents had to deal with

growing enrollments. From very low enrollments during World War II, approximately 1,350 registered in the fall of 1946, due in some measure to the return of many veterans. That year's freshman class was approximately one-half of the student body. The enrollment continued to grow steadily and had reached 2,071 in 1970, the year Vander Werf resigned.

Both presidents oversaw major building projects—from residences halls, to major classroom buildings and the Van Zoeren Library—in order to accommodate the growing enrollments. Both also were engaged in hiring dozens of new faculty members to keep pace with the growing enrollments. They were the first presidents to hold PhD degrees and to be active both in teaching and administration. More and more of the new faculty came with advanced degrees, thus raising the academic standards of the college. Vander Werf had the privilege of occupying the presidency when the college celebrated its centennial in 1966, but he also had the challenge of

dealing with student protests against the war in Viet Nam.

During the twenty-five years these able individuals served, Hope College achieved many significant goals, but decisions and actions by both also led to a crisis of identity for the college by the conclusion of Vander Werf's presidency. During Vander Werf's



Winants Chapel on the Hope campus along with the attached Graves Hall was constructed in 1893 thanks to the efforts of Rev. G. Henry Mandeville. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

administration, an uncertainty arose as to how secularized the college could be and yet remain a college of the church. This uncertainty was especially evident in the hiring of faculty.

Yet there remained a close affiliation with the RCA, which produced a 1969 document entitled "Covenant of Mutual Responsibility."²¹ In it the denomination assured its three colleges—Hope, Central, and Northwestern—that it treasured them and promised to support them. In spite of this covenant, the denomination did not provide the solid spiritual and financial support the college needed at this time. Gaining sufficient financial support from the denomination has always been difficult as foreign missions efforts seemed to have greater appeal.

Some Christian day school education was attempted in the mid-nineteenth century. Samuel B. Schieffelin funded a movement to establishment such schools and several were begun, but very few survived. The early immigrant churches tried to establish such local schools, but they usually failed. Some areas of the church established academies, but the denomination, in a fairly rapid Americanization process, had looked to the public schools to provide primary and secondary education.

A major reason for this lack of passion for Christian day schools came indirectly from the Masonic controversy which culminated in the early 1880s. Unlike the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), some RCA congregations permitted members to join secret societies, provided the local consistory approved and members indicated their first priority was active church membership.²² The mother church in the Netherlands of both the Midwestern RCA congregations and the CRC instructed emigrating members who left the Netherlands after 1882 not to unite with the RCA because it was no

longer a "true" church. The CRC was now designated the true church. Most of the immigrants followed this instruction and consequently the RCA was affected very little by the Dutch theologian, journalist, and statesman, Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper, who heavily influenced these immigrants, had given new impetus to the establishment of Christian schools at all levels of instruction.

The impact of this on Hope during the Lubbers and Vander Werf years was twofold: there was no theological foundation in the denomination, such as that provided by Abraham Kuyper, to ensure strong church support, and Hope College was not theologically equipped to help students gain a Christian world and life view or an understanding of how faith impacts learning. Further, the college had fewer faculty grounded in the Reformed faith by this time. The general practice, up until the post-World War II years, had been to hire Christian professors and members of churches in the Reformed tradition to educate the college students in matters of faith. Students had always been required to take Bible and religion courses. As more and more faculty were hired who did not know the Christian faith well, or believe in it at all, an identity crisis for Hope was inevitable.

Lubbers and Vander Werf clearly had lifted the college to new academic levels, but the lack of a thorough theological basis for a dynamic Christian college was lacking and the effects of this were evident by 1970 when Vander Werf's suggested reorganizing the college's board of trustees so that it no longer was composed mainly of Reformed Church ministers. The change was approved and of the twenty-four members of the new board, only one-half were elected by the denomination. Of those twelve, six were ministers and six were lay persons. This change encouraged a



President Gordon and Margaret Van Wylen in 1988. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

more ecumenical spirit at the college as well as attracting people to the board with more resources. The reorganized board of trustees then realized that the next president had to deal with some very serious issues at the core of the college. Was Hope College going to be an intentional Christian college, or one simply affiliated with the church with faith issues relegated to the religion department and the chaplain, as had been the case in most of American colleges founded by religious denominations?

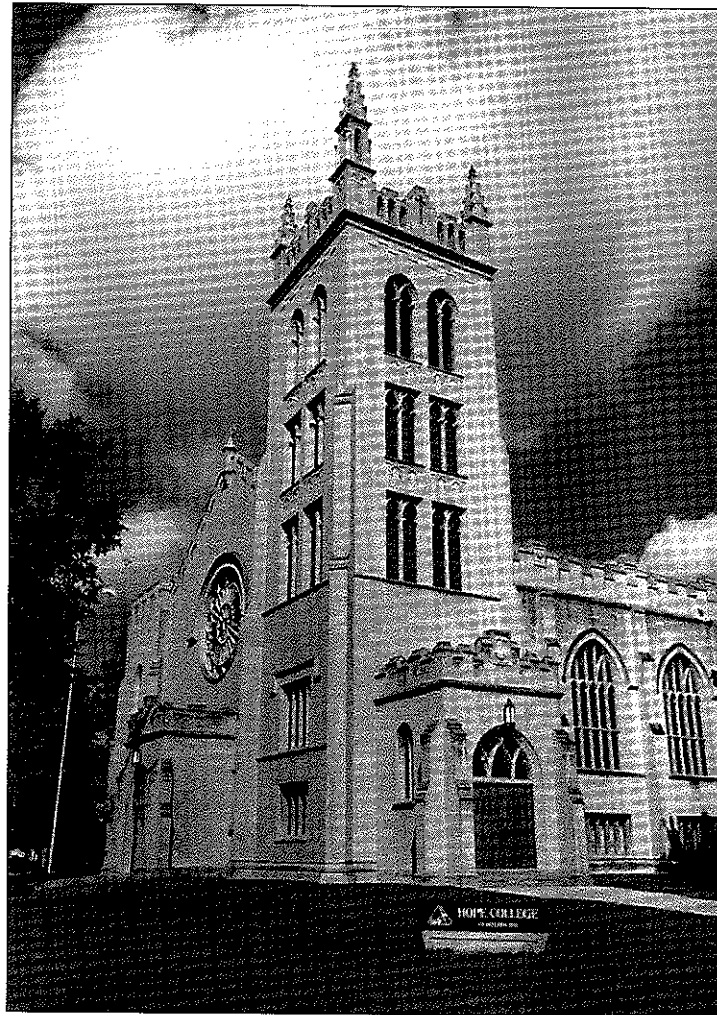
For two years after Vander Werf's retirement the college was leaderless and the board and the presidential search committee did some serious reflection on the question. When Gordon J. Van Wylen, Dean of the School of Engineering at the University of Michigan, was selected as president, something new was afoot and the turnaround at Hope College had begun. For the first time in its history, the president was not an RCA minister or a graduate of the college. Van Wylen accepted the challenge and went to work. He had never done any

major fund-raising but demonstrated his skill. His training in engineering was a godsend because the college needed many new buildings in order to provide more space for quality education.²³ The culmination of this was the construction of a library which was named for Van Wylen and his wife, Margaret, in gratitude for the contributions they made to the college.

In all the work as president, Van Wylen knew that he had to give priority to inspiring a new vision of Hope as a Christian liberal arts college. He led the board to adopt a mission statement which he had crafted: "The mission of Hope College is to offer with recognized excellence, academic programs in liberal arts, in the setting of a residential, undergraduate, coeducational college, and in the context of the historic Christian faith."²⁴ There was no opposition to the major portion of the statement, but questions arose about how the words "in the context of the historic Christian faith" would be interpreted and understood. This concluding phrase was necessarily broad at this point because of the diversity of committed Christians teaching at Hope, including Roman Catholics, Reformed, and other Protestant communions. This would welcome all Christian faculty members who taught and served the college well. The simplicity of the phrase tempered the anxiety of many faculty and students that Hope would become a Bible college or a carefully circumscribed college threatening academic quality. Van Wylen saw something special "in a combination of seriousness about Christianity combined with

ecumenicity and theological openness" which enabled students and faculty from across the Christian spectrum to feel welcomed and at home.²⁵ The new mission statement led the college to arrive at a unique position, one not always understood: ecumenical, evangelical, catholic, and Reformed.

Van Wylen revealed great skill in introducing the meaning and significance of the new mission statement



Built during the presidency of Edward Dimment, the chapel was named in his honor in 1959. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

into the life of the college. One key move was a change in the curriculum which required every student, in order to qualify for graduation, to take a senior seminar course, in which the instructor led a discussion on faith and learning and how these intersect at a

Christian college. The course was to replace the long-standing "senior Bible requirement" taught only by the members of the religion department. Lars Granberg, a psychology professor who began his teaching career at the college in 1947, returned to Hope in 1975 from the presidency of Northwestern College as dean of the social sciences. Granberg was given the responsibility to train all the faculty who agreed to teach this course. The provost who took charge of the academic program in 1984, Jacob E. Nyenhuis, gave particular impetus to this program and inaugurated other means which provided the theological basis for Hope's new understanding of what it means to be a Christian liberal arts college. The college administration also began making intentional efforts to hire well-qualified faculty who would be committed to the vision of Hope College as a college where the Christian faith played a vital part in the entire life of the institution. Under Van Wylen's guidance, Hope became able to combine high intellectual standards in academics and challenge faculty and students "to think hard about theological issues and how those issues should come to be embodied in daily life. The lives of students and faculty were deeply impacted by a low-keyed but vital Christian presence in the college."²⁶

John H. Jacobson, a philosopher by training, and Van Wylen's successor in 1987 was equally committed to Christian higher education through his tenure which ended in 1999. In

1997, he led the board of trustees to adopt a detailed mission statement that the college would operate in the context of the historic Christian faith and would be regarded as a Christian college in the academic world.

Jacobson gave even more emphasis to the importance of the nature of the Christian college by re-vamping the chapel program. He saw the need of a conference center at the college which resulted in the construction of the Haworth Inn and Conference Center and the Cook residence center.

Hope has confidently entered a new century and a new millenium with a new sense of direction as a Christian college with a high quality liberal arts program. Its science program has a national reputation, the four departments of art, dance, music, and theatre are now nationally accredited, and the social sciences and humanities have many special strengths which bring notice to the college. The faculty is strongly engaged in research and publishing. The appointment of Dr. James E. Bultman as president in 1999, by all appearances, indicates that Hope College will continue to be committed to the Christian college ideal. His goal is to guide Hope College in becoming a premier Christian college. With Hope's roots to the Pioneer School in the Holland Colony going back to 1851, the institution has come through one hundred fifty years with renewed confidence that it will fulfill the vision of Albertus C. Van Raalte and Philip Phelps, its founders. 6

Endnotes

1. The term first used to describe the Holland, Michigan, area which included several neighboring villages such as Graafschap, Overisel, Vriesland, and Zeeland.

2. For more information on the Separation of 1834, see "1834: Afscheiding and Emigration" in *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the Nineteenth Century* by Elton J. Bruins and Robert P. Swierenga (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 5-35.

3. "1850—The Union of 1850: The Classis of Holland Joins the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church" in *Family Quarrels*, 36-60.

4. This congregation split in 1882 over the issue of the Masonic controversy. Most of its members united with the Christian Reformed Church in 1884. The majority won a legal case and ownership of the church building often referred to as Pillar Church. The congregation is now the Pillar Christian Reformed Church.

5. The earliest document of the college was written and published by Philip Phelps in "Historical Sketch" in *First Catalogue and Circular of Hope College, Incorporated A. D. 1866, at Holland, Ottawa Co., Michigan: with a Catalogue and Circular of the Holland Academy, 1865-6* (Holland, MI: Council of Hope College, 1866), 41-48.

6. Most of the information in this essay is based upon the college's published histories. The first was *Anchor of Hope: The History of an American Denominational Institution Hope College* by Preston J. Stegenga (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) and the second, *A Century of Hope 1866-1966* by Wynand Wichers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

7. Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America, Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, revised edition, 1989), 601.

8. All aspects of Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte's interest in education are

recounted in "He saw in education the hope of the colony. It was his lodestar, the compass by which he steered" in *Albertus C. Van Raalte Dutch Leader and American Patriot* by Jeanne M. Jacobson, Elton J. Bruins, and Larry J. Wagenaar (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1996), 68-85.

9. Stegenga, *Anchor of Hope*, 66.

10. "Circular of the Holland Academy. A brief statement of its object, condition and prospects, course of instruction, &c. &c." in *The Hollander*, vol. 7, no: 27 (June 10, 1857), and three succeeding issues. A primary purpose was also stated: to train young men and women as teachers.

11. The Second Reformed Church, now known as Hope Church, was founded the summer of 1862. Only English was used in its worship, in contrast with all the other member congregations of the Classis of Holland which initially used Dutch exclusively in worship.

12. *The Alumni Number [of] The Hope College Milestone of 1930*, produced by Willard Wichers and Chester Meengs, contains pictures of all graduating classes beginning in 1866 and continuing through 1930. A member of every class wrote a paragraph about the class except the first one, of which no one was still living.

13. Wichers, *A Century of Hope*, 100.

14. Phelps was allowed to stay in Van Vleck Hall by the executive committee of the Council because the college owed him back salary of \$5300 (Wichers, *A Century of Hope*, 102).

15. Phelps' daughter, Frances, was one of the first four women to graduate in 1882.

16. Information on four distinguished missionaries (Samuel Zwemer, Albertus Pieters, A. Livingston Warnshuis, and John H. Banninga) was published in "Scholarship in the Service of Missions" by Elton J. Bruins in *Into All the World: Hope College and*

International Affairs, Essays in Honor of Paul G. Fried, (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1985), 25-39.

17. Muste's biography by Jo Ann Ooiman Robinson is entitled *Abraham Went Out, A Biography of A. J. Muste* (Philadelphia, 1981). For many years Muste was an acute embarrassment to Hope College for his involvement in the pacifist movement. He is now counted as one of Hope's distinguished graduates. An annual lecture is presented in his memory.

18. The history of athletics at Hope College is ably recounted by Gordon M. Brewer in "*But How You Played the Game!*" *A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at Hope College, Part I - 1862-1955* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1992).

19. "Dimnent Memorial Chapel: After 50 Years Still a Hymn Turned to Stone" by Elton J. Bruins in *Hope College Magazine* [19]78, 3-6.

20. Wichers, *A Century of Hope*, 204.

21. *The Acts & Proceedings of the 163rd Regular Session of the General Synod Reformed Church in America, Convened at Douglas College of Rutgers, The State University of N. J. and New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey, June 6-11, 1969* (Somerset Press, 1969), 64-70.

22. For further information, see "1882: Secession Yet Again: The Masonic Controversy" in *Family Quarrels*, 108-135.

23. Buildings erected during Van Wylen's tenure as president are given in "Campus Alive: A Walking Tour of Hope College," by Elton J. Bruins and Larry J. Wagenaar (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1999).

24. The mission statement is published every year on the title page of the college catalog.

25. Dr. Peter Schakel, in a communication to the author from him, 1 March 2001; in possession of the author.

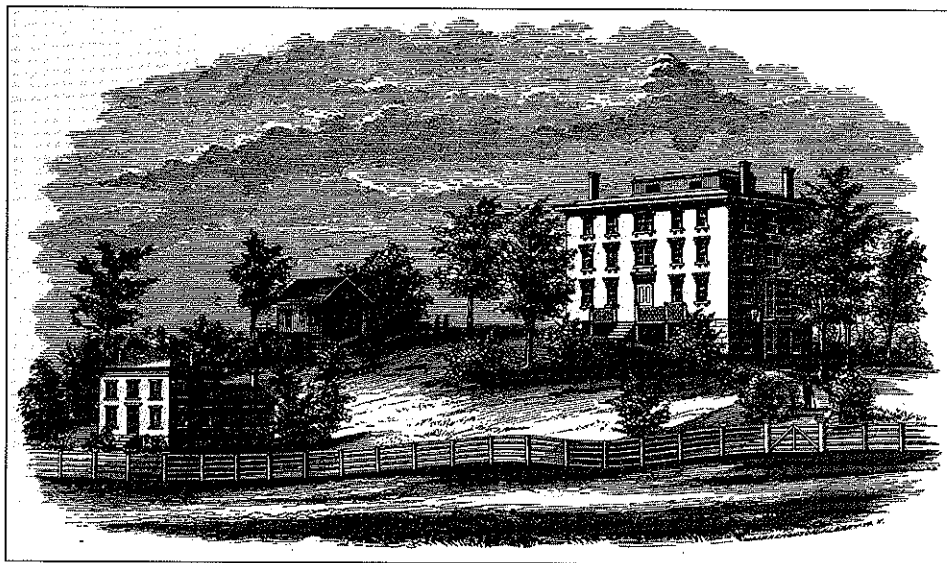
26. Ibid.

Western Theological Seminary The First Century 1866–1966

Donald J. Bruggink

The beginnings of theological education by the Reformed Church in America (RCA) west of the Atlantic seaboard now celebrated as the origin of Western Theological Seminary in 1866 was as a theological department of Hope College. That year, seven members of the graduating class of Hope College petitioned the General Synod of the RCA that “arrangements be made for them to

petition may have been due to a number of factors. It was not the first time such a request had been made, or had been considered by the General Synod. As early as 1848 a report had been submitted to the Synod in favor of such training other than in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Now, however, seven men in one year were ready to pursue ministerial studies in the West. Further, the divisions among



Theological instruction began in 1867 on the campus of Hope College. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

prosecute their theological studies at that college” Decently and in order, the petition was referred to the committee on the professorate and with alacrity the committee urged the Synod that “leave be granted to pursue their theological studies at Hope College” at no expense to the Synod or the Board of Education and that Synod might withdraw its permission at any time.

The expeditious handling of the

the Dutch immigrants, beginning in 1857, undoubtedly made the Synod more attentive to western needs, especially when such action held the promise of training men for ministry loyal to the RCA. From the perspective of the students at Hope, it was not a lack of a highly reputable seminary within the RCA, but rather that New Brunswick was a long way away, both geographically and culturally. The seminary at New Brunswick, while

Rev. Donald J. Bruggink holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh and is the James A. H. Cornell Professor of Historical Theology at Western Seminary and is an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America.

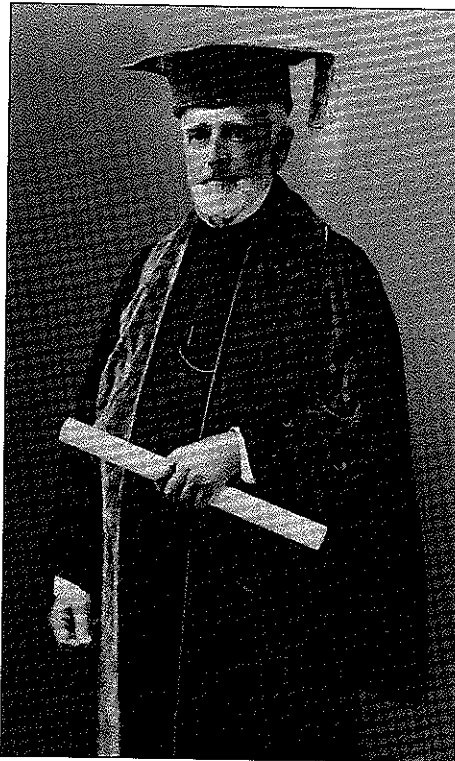
theologically conservative, was nonetheless thoroughly Americanized, whereas among West Michigan Dutch immigrants the process of Americanization had barely begun. No wonder that impoverished immigrants desired the convenience and cultural safety of a theological education at Hope College. However, the petition must not be seen as the sole result of student desires. Rev. A.C. Van Raalte, leader of the colony, and Dr. Philip Phelps, president of Hope College, were both convinced of the need for theological education attuned to meet the needs of the recent immigrants and supported the petition.

For the first year, instruction was given by Hope College professors. In 1869, the Synod appointed Dr. Cornelius Chrispell of Hope College as Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology. The Revs. T. Romeyn Beck and Charles Scott, professors at the college, continued to assist in the department of theology without additional remuneration. In 1870, Dr. Philip Phelps and Rev. A.C. Van Raalte were elected as two additional professors for the school.

At the time there was talk of organizing the department as an independent institution. This auspicious beginning was undermined by grim economic realities. The western churches in the RCA did not make adequate contributions to the school, a fact compounded in 1871 by a great fire, which almost destroyed the city of Holland, and further was exacerbated by the national financial panic in 1873. Synod persevered for a time, hoping for financial improvement, but in 1877 directed the college to suspend the theological department in spite of the fact that twenty-nine students had been graduated since 1866.

The closing of the seminary shocked the western churches, but financial impoverishment made a reversal of the situation difficult. It was

not until six years later that Synod allowed instruction to resume, again as a department of the college. Dr. Nicholas M. Steffens was elected professor, but with the stipulation that he not be installed as professor until \$30,000 had been raised for the endowment of his chair. This was accomplished in December 1883, four months after Steffens had begun instruction in his own home.



Phillip Phelps, president of Hope College, and Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte were the early advocates of theological instruction in Holland. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

In 1885, the seminary was entirely separated from the college with its own governing board, faculty and curriculum, and was recognized as the Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America. Nonetheless, it was a creature of the midwestern churches as is indicated by the list of its professors, their years of service, the ministry from which they came, their seminary training and their advanced degrees. However, Western's professors always had classical and

seminary training, almost always pastoral experience, and some had advanced degrees as well. Despite its humble origin and minimal physical plant, library and endowment, it produced professors sought after by other seminaries, not only at New Brunswick, but also Dubuque, Louisville and Princeton.

During the first three decades, 1866-1895, theological instruction and worship took place on the premises of Hope College. From 1895-1952 these functions took place in Semelink Family Hall, containing five classrooms and a chapel, constructed with a gift of the Peter Semelink family of Vriesland, Michigan. In 1914 a student dormitory was built, and replaced in 1928 by Zwemer Hall, which stood until 1980. Dr. John W. Beardslee Sr. announced in 1912 that a library would be built at his expense. This trio of buildings served Western until the erection of its present Georgian colonial structure in 1954, its design, fund raising and construction done under the aegis of then president, and professor of preaching, Dr. John R. Mulder.

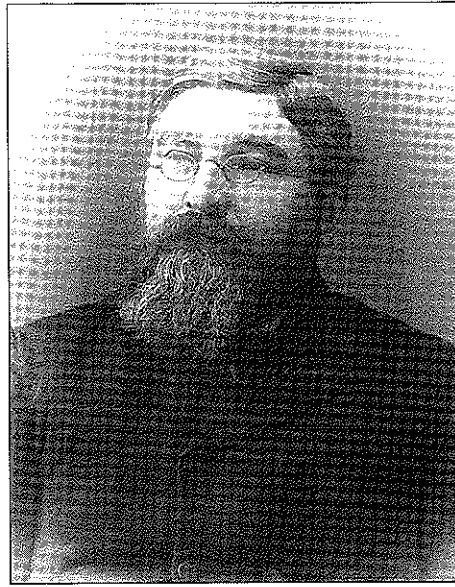
In spite of the adverse impact of the Great Depression, the number of Western graduates steadily increased during the first half of the twentieth century. During the first decade of the century an average of seven students graduated annually, that average increased to twelve during the 1930s and to twenty by 1960. During those years the school produced more ministers and missionaries in the RCA than any other school. Most of these students came to Western from Hope and Central colleges.

With the retirement of John Mulder as president in 1959, the Reverend Harold Englund became president of Western. In the next year enrollment hit a new high. Under Englund's presidency, a degree in Christian education was launched with Elaine

Lubbers, Western's first woman professor, called in 1962 to establish the program. Her creative ideas extended beyond the Masters in Religious Education (MRE), she introduced a program in which all students became involved in community agencies, which were part of the social aspects of ministry.

After Englund, Herman J. Ridder served as president, 1963-71, seeking to address tensions long endemic to the seminary. Among these was supervision of field experiences—whether preaching, teaching or summer assignments—had always been minimal. Personal problems which students brought with them to the seminary were seldom addressed, which exacerbated a third problem, the transference of personal problems to conflict with fellow students, churches and faculty. Faculty teaching had always been a very personal endeavor despite doctorates, degrees that seldom involved a methodology of teaching. Lastly, the board occasionally attempted to micro-manage the theology of the seminary.

Ridder addressed the first problem through the appointment of Robert J. Nykamp, who brought a greater degree of supervision to field assignments. His gifts soon resulted in his transfer to address the second area of concern, as director of counseling and pastoral care, while Garret A. Wilterdink was added to the faculty as director of field education. The third concern was addressed through an annual week of professional training for faculty to increase teaching



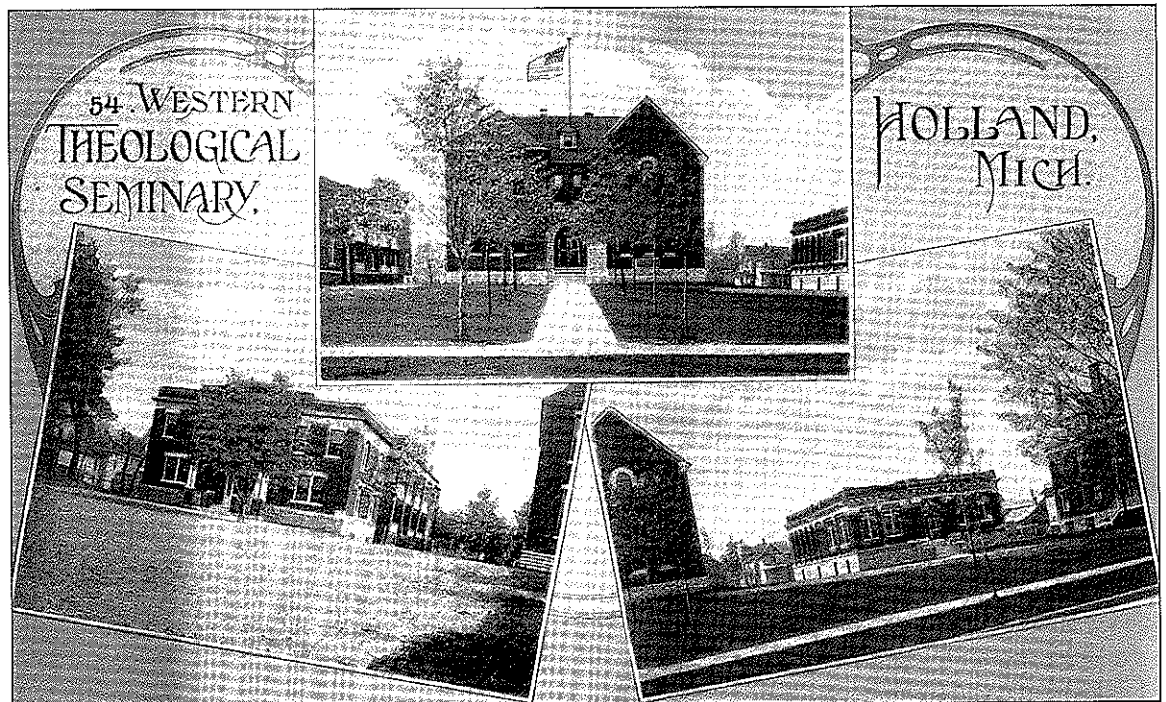
Nicholas M. Steffens, chosen to provide theological instruction when the program was revived in 1883. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

skills. The fourth matter became an issue when a board member circulated a letter to fellow board members inviting their cooperation in rescinding President Ridder's invitation to Professor James Muilenberg, of the

University of Chicago, as visiting professor of Old Testament. Ridder held his ground, Professor Muilenberg conducted his courses to student acclaim, and the attempt at micro-management regular channels by the board ceased.

The faculty, at the direction of its President Ridder, set about to create a Century Two Curriculum. It was intended to organize studies in such a way that learning would be sequential, thus providing each necessary building block for the next step in understanding. The sequence was to be thoroughly Reformed in that it was the Bible that was seen as basic to the first year, followed by theology in historical sequence and context, with the third year involving the application of the former two, thereby sharpening skills for ministry.

Unfortunately, when the Century Two Curriculum began in the fall of 1967, it was a time when students desired freedom at every turn—hardly an opportune time to introduce a curriculum with large blocks of



The three buildings that comprised the seminary's physical plant, 1914-1954, as it became the leading source of candidates for ministry in the Reformed Church in America. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

required courses and few electives. The curriculum program originated with the younger faculty, older members being more dubious. The demands were demanding, for many thought courses included were simply consumptive of time. With the resignation of the president, the zeal for the Century Two Curriculum was not supported by administration or faculty. Student objections were

New Brunswick as an institution? Thereupon followed several years of conversations and negotiations involving the administrations, faculties and boards, then boards of both New Brunswick and Western, as well as the General Synod Executive Committee, and the General Program Council.

The result was the formation in 1967 of one Board of Theological Education for both institutions to

would transfer to the other sites to fulfill five ministry skill areas. Continued use of both sites could be justified through the opportunity given students to experience the cultural ambiance of both regions of the church. Thus both the unity of the RCA, as well as a broadened ecumenical perspective, could be served.

In July of 1969, Ridder was appointed president of both seminaries. Unfortunately, before the first four BLMS students had completed their initial two years at New Brunswick and arrived at Western in September of 1971, Ridder resigned to accept a call from the flagship congregation of the Midwest, Central Reformed in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The call was accepted, in part, because Ridder saw the difficulties that the BLMS was beginning to experience, and being so closely identified with the program, he chose to remove himself in order to give the board the opportunity to make its choices.

Between then and the arrival of thirteen BLMS students in the fall of 1972 other momentous events were to shape the future of the seminaries and the BLMS program. A continued strain on the finances of both schools, combined with continued agitation for a seminary at a single site, affected both institutions and their single board. The principal obstacle to a unified seminary in two locations was the question of constituency and support. Western feared that it would lose the greater part of its church support were it to be physically transferred to New Brunswick, and New Brunswick was convinced of the same. In May 1972, the hour of decision to merge the seminaries arrived. The General Synod Executive Committee had recommended that theological education be consolidated on one site, while the Board of Theological Education Site Committee suggested continuation of two sites



Central and Western Theological Seminary in the 1950s. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope

translated into curricular change and within two years of its implementation the Century Two Curriculum became a victim of student protest and part of the faculty's past. In 1970, James H. Harrison, president, and the Board of Trustees of New Brunswick Theological Seminary suggested that it be in the interest of the denomination that a single seminary was preferable to two. As he had already overseen the construction of Herzog Hall, the 1856 building of "Holy Hill" at New Brunswick, the question now became whether to advocate the demolition of

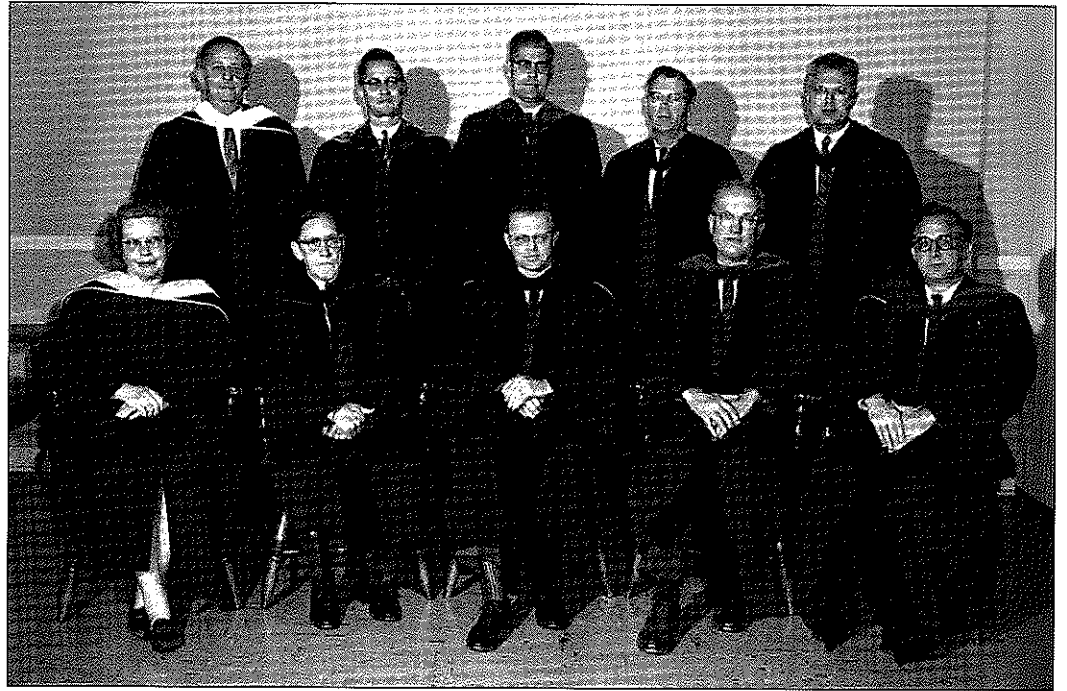
implement a single theological faculty. In 1968, the Program Design Committee of this board recommended a two-level program leading to the degree of Master of Theology. This program became known as the Bi-level Multi-site (BLMS) Program and was undoubtedly the most creative product of the merger negotiations. The BLMS Program incorporated two very different study formats at both the New Brunswick and Western sites. The program called for an initial two years at the first site with biblical and historical studies. Then students

while consideration of one site at either location or a new site continued. The motion for consolidation at one site failed decisively—decisively because school loyalties were clearly transcendent in the balloting.

The decision against a single site was soon followed by the seminary board also turning away from a single presidency when the faculties of both institutions felt their individual interests ill-served by a joint presidency. The result was that in October of 1972, the Board of Theological Education invited Howard G. Hageman and I. John Hesselink to become presidents of New Brunswick and Western respectively.

The rejection of a single site and a single presidency could be interpreted as undermining the BLMS program. However, the larger reasons for the failure of that program were the result of inadequate internal financial undergirding and an external economic downturn. The economic pressures on both institutions, which had led them to embrace the possibility of a united seminary with combined resources, required that the costs for moving were to be borne by students who would also have to find employment in both locations as their education progressed. As jobs for students and spouses became increasingly scarce in the Holland area during the early 1970s, many students could not afford to give up the substantial paying jobs already secured in the New Brunswick area. Had sufficient financial support been available, or had there been the administrative muscle to secure or allocate the needed funds, the program might have survived.

As the first decade of Western's second century ended, the most creative decade in its history, the Century Two Curriculum, the pro-



The Seminary faculty in 1961. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

posed merger of the seminaries, and the BLMS program all disappeared, and none for lack of merit. All were superior to what had gone before. The cause of failure: a substructure which at key points was unable to keep the program in place in the face of adversity, whether this was faculty reluctance, students opposition, lack of support from constituency or board, or insufficient finances.

The appointment in 1973 of I. John Hesselink, formerly professor of theology at Tokyo Union Seminary, as president of Western Theological Seminary began auspiciously with unanimous faculty support. He was perceived by the faculty and board as a scholar/president, and his missionary vocation and visible piety were seen as assets in communicating with the church. President Hesselink's administration was marked by three major advances for the school, one within the church, a second in physical structure, a third in degree programs.

Within the church, the issue that took center stage was that of the

ordination of women to the office minister of word and sacrament. After overtures which had begun in 1918, Synod voted in 1972 to change the book of church order to ordain women to the offices of elder and deacon. At the seminary, women were accepted for education in both the Bachelor of Divinity (BD) which later became the Masters of Divinity (MDiv) and MRE programs. As early as 1963, Elsie Law earned her BD degree. Over the years women began to appear for the MRE degree and in 1976 Joyce Borgman graduated with a MDiv degree. In 1979 Synod voted to approve the ordination of women to the office of minister of word and sacrament. The number of women in seminary working for the MDiv degree has subsequently steadily increased from five students and one graduate in 1979 to the class of 1999 which began with nineteen men and seventeen women.

The second major accomplishment of Hesselink's administration was the building of the Cook Center for Theological Research. After a thorough analysis of the seminary's overall

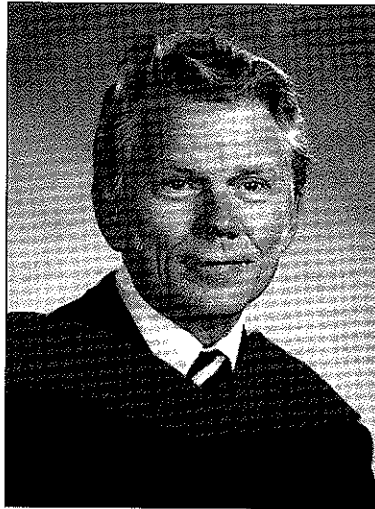
needs, not only for library space but also for additional space for audio-visual learning, a crucial decision was made to keep the entire enterprise under one roof. In terms of the land available, this could only be done by building upward, and an eight-story building was planned to be attached to the east of the seminary building complex. A reconsideration of the completed schematic design, resulting from a major turnover in seminary administrative staff and the board's executive committee during a period of high inflation, reduced the height of the Cook Center for Theological Research. The six-story structure was dedicated in 1981.

The Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program became a reality a year after Eugene P. Heideman was appointed director of continuing education and assistant professor of theology in 1976. The DMin program accentuated many of the ideals for seminary education articulated in the BLMS program. The DMin emphasized the skills of learning in order to bring theology to bear on life. Candidates in this program are encouraged to structure their learning to achieve specific ministry goals.

The second major new degree program was the in-ministry MRE developed in 1983 by Dr. Sonja M. Stewart, professor of religious education and director of the MRE program. All course work is offered on a single day each week, enabling people already placed within the church or related fields to attain additional skills and a degree in theological education.

In 1984 Hesselink asked the board to accept his resignation in order that he might succeed M. Eugene Osterhaven in the chair of systematic theology. The board acquiesced and in the result search for a successor, concluded that Marvin D. Hoff would bring to the presidency strong leadership skills honed in the parish, mission, and denominational executive

positions, as well as experience in theological education through his position as the executive director of the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia. The Hoff administration had a strong commitment to appointing women to tenure track positions. Accordingly, the Rev. Robin Mattison, doctoral candidate at Vanderbilt, and Western's first Lutheran faculty member, was



Herman J. Ridder, president during much of the 1960s. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

called in 1987 to a position in New Testament. In 1993 Dr. Carol Bechtel was called to a tenure track position in Old Testament and became the first woman appointed as professor of theology and the fourth women at Western to hold a tenure track appointment in 1998.

Hoff sought to strengthen preaching through the Bast Memorial Preaching Program, which brought to the campus outstanding preachers/scholars for a three-day preaching festival. Annual preaching fellowships were granted to Reformed pastors to pursue self-designed learning programs to improve their preaching skills. A preaching resource center focused on the homiletic resources of the seminary in books, audio and videotapes and computer indexing of sermons and

tapes in the Cook Center for Theological Research. The Bast Professor of Preaching chair was also endowed as part of the program.

Further, Missiology became a part of the theological curriculum thanks to Hoff's support. This emphasizes intercultural mission as the style and content of ministry in North American congregational settings, which positions Western in the forefront of training for evangelistic ministry. George Hunsberger, as missiologist, helped to radically restructure and strengthen Western's ThM program. It became a graduate degree emphasizing intercultural dialogue as the context for study in a community of six to eight international and North American students. It lays the academic groundwork and guidance for a thesis significant for scholarly growth in the candidate's chosen field and provides a foundation for doctoral work for international students.

Hoff also computerized all administrative and faculty systems, both made possible and necessitated by the establishment of a professional office of advancement staffed by Scott Anderson and Harold Ritsema. In its 125th year the school became the recipient of its largest single gift: \$2.05 million from an anonymous donor and friend of an alumnus. With this amount Western's endowment reached \$7.3 million, up from \$2.4 million when Hoff assumed the presidency in 1985.

Another physical change for the seminary resulted from the 1980 closing of 12th Street between College and Columbia avenues. This allowed more pedestrian-friendly connections between the Hope College dormitories to the south and the academic buildings to the north. For the seminary, this resulted in the front (north-facing) façade of Western Theological becoming not directly accessible to vehicles. As a result the orientation of the building was rotated from front to

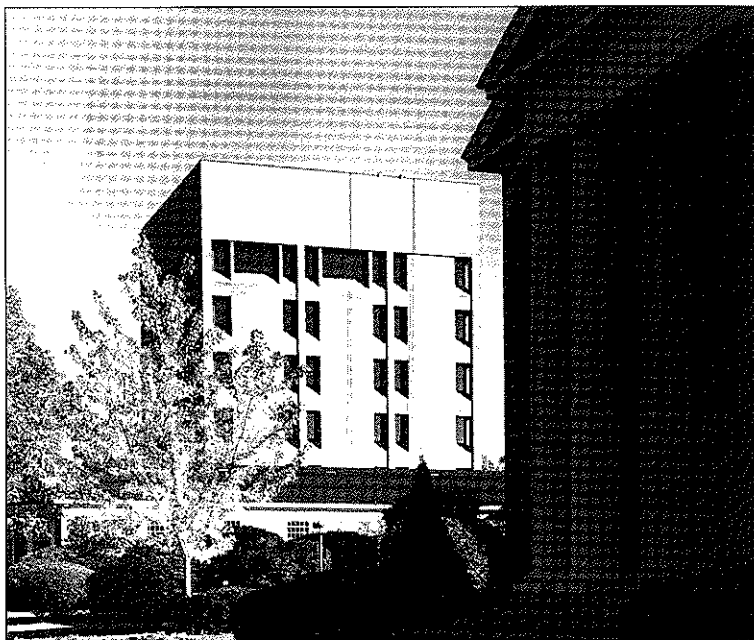
back, so that the south façade, on 13th Street, now became the front. A parking lot for visitors was constructed in the only space available, between Hope's Dimnent Chapel and the seminary complex. This parking lot was also home to a dumpster, and had visitors entering the seminary through a three-foot "back" door and narrow hallway. Hoff quickly saw the negative impression this could have on visitors.

The construction of the Cook Center for Theological Research had been completed in 1981 with the intention of making the connection between it and the older building the main entrance to the complex. But this did not occur due to a failure to spend adequate money on walks, landscaping, and parking. Instead, the entrance contiguous to the commons and chapel was also much used as the main entrance.

To address all these issues, Hoff arranged for the southern, 13th Street side of the seminary to have a pleasing entrance for the chapel and commons area. The master plan also addressed the need for adequate student housing

called "Securing New Wineskins." Part of the \$10 million campaign begun by Hoff was a gift designated for the construction of the magnificent van Daalen tracker-action pipe organ for the Mulder Chapel with a gift from the estate of Dick and Ethel Vanden Heuvel. Hoff

retired from the presidency of Western in 1994 to again become executive director of the Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, which had become a full-time position during his tenure at Western.



The six-story Cook Center for Theological Research dedicated in 1981. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

of Hope College. Voskuil's rapport with students, coupled with the recently constructed student housing, brought a revived *esprit de corps* to Western, which with the appointment of Dr. Timothy Brown to the chair of preaching and nurture of Christian vocation, resulted in a marked rise in seminary enrollment.

Under Voskuil, overseas seminars begun by Donald J. Bruggink in 1967, which were historical and ecumenical in thrust, were augmented with a required intercultural experience for students, as part of a January term constructed to make such an experience possible. These seminars have a social justice emphasis in Palestine, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Borderlands of Mexico while others have an emphasis on missions in the seminars in Chiapas, Mexico.

The \$10 million financial campaign begun under Hoff, concluded under Voskuil with a total commitment of \$13.6 million. Similarly, the curricular discussion begun with New Wineskins continued under the administration of Voskuil and academic dean James V.



Seminary students in 1982. Photo: Joint Archives, Hope College.

with a total of 32 one- to three-bedroom apartment units, and associated additional parking.

President Hoff involved the RCA in strategic planning for Western's future

Dennis N. Voskuil became president of Western in 1994 after a successful pastorate and seventeen years as an extremely popular and effective professor in the department of religion

Brownson with a major new curriculum with an emphasis on the teaching church. Integral to this curriculum is the "learning web" in which students integrate a classroom emphasis with their experience within their teaching church.

Worship has always been a daily experience at Western Seminary. In 1968 the students had petitioned, with President Ridder's support, to be allowed to celebrate the Lord's Supper within the context of chapel worship. The General Synod granted permission and the sacrament has become an increasingly important part of

seminary spirituality. During the presidency of Dennis Voskuil the celebration of the Lord's Supper has become a weekly occurrence.

The commitment to women in tenured teaching positions has also continued under Voskuil. During his term Dr. Leanne Van Dyk, nurtured in the Christian Reformed Church, was appointed the A.C. Van Raalte Professor of Systematic Theology.

Begun with a strong hope for the future, if not a strong foundation of support, Western Theological Seminary begins the twenty-first century with the same hope and a

strong foundation. Its faculty of more than two dozen active and adjunct women and men are still dedicated to preparing individuals called by God to lead mission-oriented Christian leadership. §

A note on sources:

The history of Western Theological Seminary can be found in fuller compass in an article by Elton M. Eeningenberg, "The History of the Seminary," in the *Reformed Review*, May 1966, volume 19, number 4, pages 18-33; and by Donald J. Bruggink, "Beginning the Second Century," *Reformed Review*, spring 1991, volume 44, number 3, pages 185-202. This article is indebted to the above.

Calvin Theological Seminary: Vocation and Education

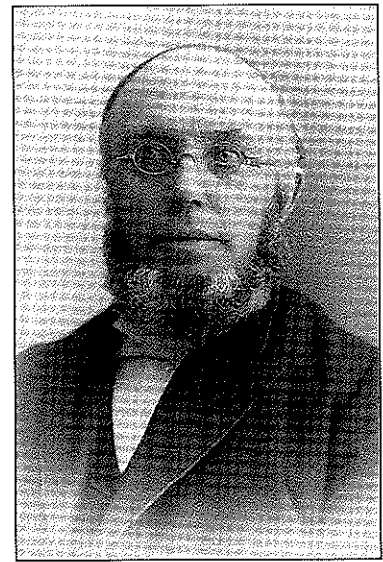
Richard H. Harms

Within months of leaving the Reformed Church in America in early 1857, the four West Michigan congregations that would become the Christian Reformed Church determined to remain a Dutch-Calvinist community set apart from the rest of nineteenth-century American society. With only one minister to serve the estimated 140 families in four congregations spread across West Michigan, an immediate need was for ordained clergy. Initial efforts to attract clergy from the Netherlands were fruitless, so the four congregations began to look to their own ranks for possible ministerial candidates. Training such candidates led to what is today a 125-year-old institution dedicated to and known for training students for a variety of ministry positions.

This decision to train candidates in the early 1860s raised a series of challenges, some of them long running and others divisive, not imagined by the small West Michigan denomination. Funding was a frequent concern. More divisive was the question of how the school would both prepare theologically sound candidates for the ministry while engaging in discussions of the most current theological research, research that might not seem to be orthodox. In short, how do you grow sound yeast for leavening dough in an environment potentially rife with contaminants. Resolving these issues during the past 125 years has been a significant part of the history of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Instruction began with the “school-in-the-parsonage”—an apprentice-like system in which students worked

directly with a clergyman in the parish ministry. On 14 November 1864, Jan Schepers began his training with Rev. Wilhelmus Van Leeuwen in Grand Rapids. A teacher before entering the ministry, Van Leeuwen was assigned to prepare the minimally educated former farmer for theological study. When Van Leeuwen accepted a call to Paterson, New Jersey, the next year,

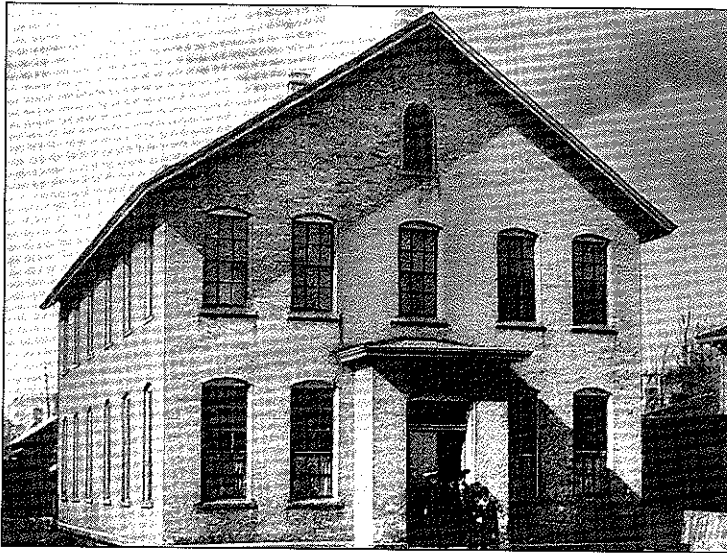


Gerrit E. Boer, the first instructor of the Theological School that becomes Calvin Theological Seminary, c. 1877. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

classis arranged for Schepers to study theology with Douwe J. Vander Werp, who had come to pastor the Graafschap, Michigan congregation in 1864. Vander Werp’s teaching load grew two years later when a second student came. By 1869 he had eight students and Vander Werp recommended to the congregations that a theological school be established.¹

Although the churches did not have

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The second floor of the William Street Christian School (constructed in 1875) served as the home for the seminary until 1894. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

the funds to do this in 1870, the seed of organizing a school had been planted. Over the next several years the matter was frequently raised, but either because the funds were not available or candidates rejected calls to



Gerhardus Vos, 1883 graduate of the seminary, became its first faculty member with a PhD in 1888. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

teach, no school was organized. A malignant tumor in Vander Werp's throat, first diagnosed during the winter of 1874-5, forced action in the fall of 1875. Due to distance and

expense, it was not feasible to call a special meeting of the General Assembly (now Synod) in October to name another instructor. Instead, Classis Michigan, the regional body in which Vander Werp served, arranged to have Rev. Gerrit E. Boer teach the students provisionally in the First Grand

Rapids CRC parsonage.

Due to the urgency of finding a permanent replacement, the General Assembly met in February 1876, four months ahead of schedule. The two efforts to call instructors from the Netherlands having failed, the Assembly selected Boer as the permanent replacement for Vander Werp. The next matter was raising \$1,700 annually for salary and housing. It was decided that since the entire denomination would benefit from a larger pool of clergy, each congregation, according to size, would contribute a specified portion, or quota, of the total amount of the budget needed. Because each family in the denomination was asked to regularly contribute to support the school, every family felt it had a direct investment, a direct interest, and a direct voice in the school and its operation. Within CRC circles, it came to be known as *Onze School* (Our School).

Financial support from the Grand Rapids congregation led to the school's temporary location there. The congregation subsidized part of Boer's salary in exchange for having the opportunity to have him supply their now

vacant pulpit from time to time. Further, for a small annual rent, the congregation provided instructional space in the upper story of its one-year-old brick Christian day-school building at the corner of Williams Street and Commerce Avenue. Further, Grand Rapids was on the cusp of dramatic growth because of its furniture-making industry. The industry generated revenue and attracted a large number of immigrants, including Dutch, to West Michigan. Within ten years of the temporary location of the school in Grand Rapids, it had become the city with the highest concentration of CRC churches in the denomination.

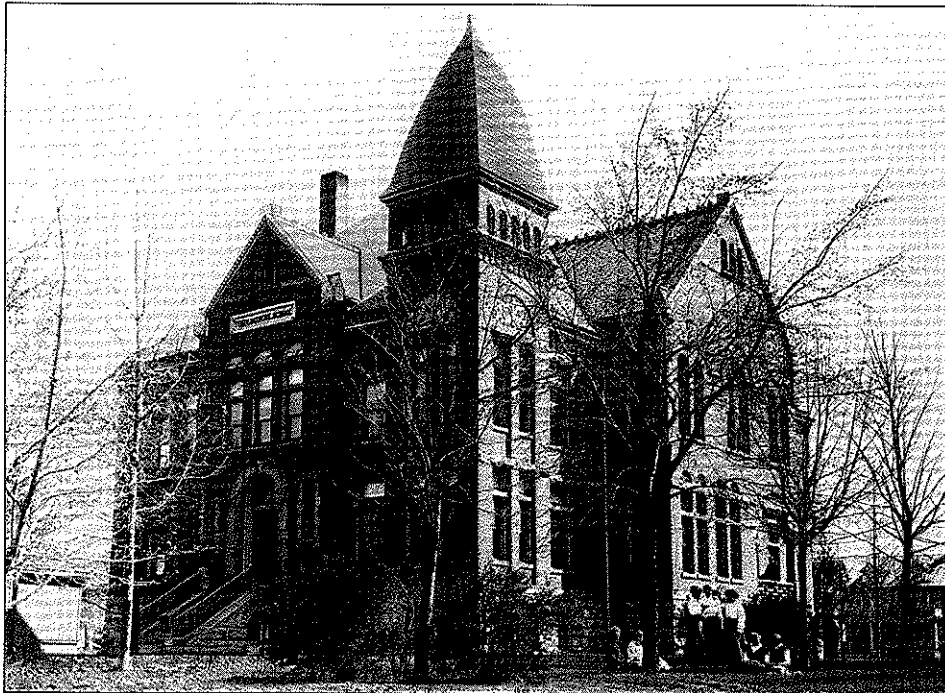
Because the CRC saw themselves as part of the Dutch Reformed tradition and "a historical continuation of the church in the Netherlands," the theological school in Kampen, the Netherlands served as the model for the CRC theological school. The governance structure, regulations for the students, financial support system for students, and curriculum all duplicated the Dutch model. The typical course sequence was six years, four in literary, or preparatory, instruction and two in theological instruction. The six-year term could be shortened if the student had successfully completed formal instruction in the required literary subjects elsewhere. But to receive a diploma from *Onze School*, students had to take the entire two-year theological sequence offered.

Boer was installed as docent (teacher) on 15 March 1876. He began in the fall of 1876 with five students and taught all twenty-one subjects. Tuition was set at \$52 annually, due quarterly in advance. In addition, students in the literary curriculum paid \$5 when they took the end-of-year exams while theology students paid \$10 to take their exams. The typical student completing the course in six years paid \$312 in tuition plus

Origins

\$40 in exam fees. Later a \$10 graduation fee was added. The total amount was equivalent to the year's gross wages for a factory laborer.

Needless to say, one person's teaching twenty-one subjects did not allow for detailed focus in any single area. All instruction was in the form of question and answer memorization.



The first building specifically for the seminary at the corner of Madison and Franklin in Grand Rapids, c.1905. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

Classes were held in the afternoons, with the mornings and evenings devoted to study and memorization. Oversight of the curriculum, admissions, promotions, and graduation decisions fell to the Curatorium, a subcommittee made up of ministers from each classis in the denomination appointed by the General Assembly (later Synod). A few years later, to meet statutory requirements, a separate board of trustees, also made up of ministers, was formed to hold ownership of the school's assets. In the 1930s the two bodies were combined into a single board of trustees. Day-to-day decisions were made by the docent and when Boer retired and the faculty

included more than one person, such decisions fell to the rector, a position each faculty member held in rotation until the first president was elected in 1931.

From the start, it was clear to all that teaching twenty-one courses competently was beyond the ability of any single instructor. This situation

became even more acute as student enrollment increased from seven in 1876 to fifteen in 1881. The following year, 20-year-old Gerhardus Vos, a gifted student, was hired to teach half time and he continued attending classes half time.

Although Boer and Vos accomplished much, they were still unable to provide adequate instruction in all twenty-one courses. A second full-time instructor was needed. Vos seemed the ideal candidate, but the 1883 Synod considered him too young for the full-time appointment. Efforts to obtain a minister from the Netherlands failed and when Vos graduated and went on to Princeton, a sharing arrangement

was worked out with the Christian Reformed congregation in Vriesland, Michigan, located a few miles east of Zeeland. Vriesland's pastor, Gerrit K. Hemkes, taught in Grand Rapids during the week and returned to Vriesland on weekends to preach. Well educated in the Netherlands and with some experience teaching theological students in the parsonage while serving a congregation in Bunde, Germany, Hemkes proved a capable instructor. The next year he became the second full-time docent at the school.

By the next synod, in 1886, another issue had developed in the church, an issue which led to hiring a third faculty member. Church leaders saw that using only Dutch in all religious activity, particularly in worship, alienated the young, who otherwise lived in a fully English-speaking world. These young people were attending English services offered by other denominations. To retain these young people, provisions were needed for English preaching in the CRC. Since all instruction at the theological school was in Dutch and the two faculty members felt insufficiently skilled to both teach English and teach in English, a third docent with these abilities was needed.

Vos, who was studying in Germany at the time, was selected to teach English, teach some of the preparatory courses in English, and to preach in English at least once every Sunday. After being permitted to defer beginning until completing his PhD work at the University of Strasbourg, Vos joined the faculty in 1888. He began a very successful teaching career, although some students bridled at having to take instruction in English, a language they did not readily understand.

The growing faculty pointed to another problem for the Curatorium. The second floor of the Williams Street

school had become too small to house the growing number of students and the growing library. Suggestions to move the school to Holland or Zeeland were rejected, and in 1890 Grand Rapids, then home to seven CRC congregations and the railroad hub of West Michigan, was selected to be the location of a new facility. After a number of sites in the city had been considered, several contiguous lots northwest of the intersection of Franklin Street (then known as Fifth Avenue) and Madison were chosen. Rev. Jacob Noordewier, from Fremont, Michigan, was called to spend one year visiting every family in the ninety-nine CRC congregations from New York to Nebraska to raise the necessary funds. It took him two years, but when he was done he had collected \$20,000, above his expenses, against the \$27,000 needed for land acquisition and construction. The unsubscribed \$7,000 was borrowed. Well heated, lit, and ventilated, the building opened in 1892 with ample space and the assumption that it was able to meet all needs for decades to come.

But another, more difficult issue to solve developed during the Vos tenure. A small minority, initially one influential minister, questioned Vos's doctrinal soundness. Lammert Jan Hulst, minister of Coldbrook CRC, who had left the Reformed Church when its synod refused to bar members of both bound groups from church membership, opposed the decision to teach and preach in English.² Hulst, who served as president of the CRC in 1884 and 1890 also saw in the new, unacceptable strain of Calvinism coming out of Europe. In his efforts as a member of the Curatorium failed to remove what he perceived as a danger from the theological school where future ministers were being trained, he went public

with his concern and published *Infra En Supra* in 1891. In the booklet he delineated the debate between election and predestination and made clear his position that election is the sound, correct and only Calvinist view.³ Because of Hulst's opposition, Vos in 1892 seriously considered, but was persuaded by the other curators to decline, a call from Princeton University to their chair in Biblical Theology. The next year Vos again received the call from Princeton, which he now



Louis Berkhof, elected as the first president of the seminary in 1931 had joined the faculty in 1906 after serving two congregations in the Christian Reformed Church. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

accepted. Although Hulst may have seen the departure as a victory for doctrinal purity, for the Curatorium Vos's resignation came just as it was discussing adding a fourth faculty position. Now instead of four for the new year, two faculty remained. Four area ministers, including Hulst, aided Boer and Hemkes teaching classes previously taught by Vos. As a tempo-

rary measure, this worked, but the Curatorium urged the Synod to add two full-time faculty members.

Having had difficulty attracting ordained ministers to the faculty, the Curatorium decided that the preparatory portion of the curriculum could be taught by lay teachers. At the same time the Synod decided to admit students who did not intend to become ministers. This decision resulted from the growing number of Christian schools organized by CRC congregations and the desire for teachers with Christian training.⁴ Although it took some time before non-theological students enrolled, a two-track curriculum resulted from these 1894 decisions. The literary track became John Calvin Junior College in 1906; a third year was added in 1908 and a four-year liberal arts curriculum began in 1920. The theology track became Calvin Theological Seminary.

To fill the vacancy created by Vos's departure, Rev. Henricus Beuker, pastor in Muskegon, was appointed to teach Systematic and Practical Theology. At Beuker's death in 1900, Rev. Foppe Ten Hoor, from Oakdale Park CRC in Grand Rapids, was appointed to this position. With a keen and vigorous intellect, a determined personality, and writing style that could make complex theological issues clear to the average reader, Ten Hoor had a profound impact on the seminary and in the denomination for the next two decades. A sharp critic of some of Abraham Kuyper's Neo-Calvinism views, Ten Hoor worked tirelessly to prevent the seminary and the church from adopting what he perceived to be various errors coming from Europe. Of particular concern to Ten Hoor was Higher Criticism, which seemed to view theology like a science.

For Ten Hoor, one of the first evidences of this at Calvin came shortly after the appointment of Ralph

Janssen in 1902. Like Vos fifteen years earlier, Janssen came with a European Ph.D. and was disposed toward Neo-Calvinism, which raised Ten Hoor's concern. Janssen seems to have increased this concern and raised it to the level of antipathy with an imperious attitude that included asking for special treatment from the Curatorium because of his education. While the rest of the faculty

carried heavy loads school year after school year, Janssen requested and received approval for a leave after only one year.⁵ Shortly after his return from leave, tension among the faculty increased over a matter of student discipline with Hemkes siding with Ten Hoor.⁶ Exacerbating this tension was the student body also taking sides in the matter. And it seemed to Ten Hoor and Hemkes that the more academically able students were attracted to Janssen and were therefore in danger of being drawn into theological danger. The students saw Janssen as the more academically gifted and challenging instructor while Ten Hoor and Hemkes were behind on the most current scholarship and instead followed the tradition of reading their prepared notes year after year without alteration. Although the discipline matter was quickly resolved, tension between the two groups remained, abating only in 1906 when Janssen resigned to seek further training.

To fill the vacancy, Louis Berkhof



Active and emeritus seminary faculty in 1956. The new president, John Kromminga, is in the second row, second from the left. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

was called. Also a keen intellect and prolific author, Berkhof likewise felt the orthodoxy of the church could best be protected by maintaining a watchful eye for signs of nascent heresy at the seminary, as he stated in his inaugural address as the first president of the seminary in 1931. Ten Hoor found in Berkhof an able, dedicated, and like-minded theologian particularly in 1914 when Janssen returned to the faculty. Also joining the faculty that year was Samuel Volbeda, as concerned with theological purity as were Ten Hoor and Berkhof. Volbeda's particular gift was his ability to communicate his passion with remarkable eloquence from the pulpit rather than via the written word.

At the time of these appointments, the college and the seminary were engaged in obtaining a new campus farther east on Franklin Street, building new facilities, and moving into those quarters in 1918. Due to financial limitations the college and the seminary continued to share a single administration/classroom/chapel building. Just as the move was being

completed, it became evident that the seminary faculty had divided, with Ten Hoor, Berkhof, Volbeda, Heyns and the retired Hemkes on one side, Janssen and several colleagues from the college faculty, on the other. Concerned that Janssen was persuaded by the theories of Higher Criticism, the four faculty members twice brought their concerns to the Curatorium. Among the specific points at

issue were the authorship of the Pentateuch, the nature of miracles, and whether the Old Testament actually or symbolically speaks of Christ and the church. Not only was Janssen upheld both times, but the Curatorium reprimanded the four.⁷

They appealed this action to the 1920 CRC Synod which both denied the Curatorium's reprimand of the faculty majority and their charges against Janssen. For his critics, part of the difficulty in finding evidence against Janssen was that he did not dictate and distribute his notes as the other faculty members did; instead students had taken it upon themselves to publish *their* notes from his classes. During his defense Janssen pointed out that problems in these notes were not his, but those of the students who had either misunderstood or made errors in writing.

Until this point the debate had remained largely within the walls of the seminary, but Rev. Herman Hoeksema made the situation publicly known via his column in *The Banner*. Hoeksema, drawing upon the written

documentation, which consisted of the four professors' criticisms and the students' notes, since Janssen had not written in his own defense, took issue with the synodical decision. Once the debate became public, the denomination began to divide on the matter with each side finding a voice through periodicals. *Religion in Culture*, edited by Rev. E.J. Tuuk and several Calvin College faculty members, defended Janssen's views while *The Witness*, edited by Berkhof, was critical of his views. On appeal from several local churches, the matter came to the 1922 Synod. Again the charges were not well substantiated and Janssen again chose not to present much of a defense. Not being able to come to an informed decision, Synod decided to end the matter by finding Janssen's views to be un-Reformed and removing him from the faculty. Janssen moved to Chicago where he taught part-time and sold financial securities.

The damage caused was not as easily repaired as taking these steps had been. Several of Janssen's sharpest critics, Revs. Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof, had their own orthodoxy challenged during the controversy. The results of those challenges caused both to leave the denomination. Similarly, Rev. Q. Breen, a strong Janssen supporter, left the denomination when his appeal to the next synod was not accepted.

For the seminary, the internal divisiveness ended with Janssen's removal. Ten Hor retired in 1924 and two formidable intellects, Clarence Bouma and Martin Wyngaarden, joined the faculty. Eloquent

and forthright, Bouma focused on effective faith in life and was among the earliest critics of corrupt government in Kent County. In 1935 he founded the *Calvin Forum* and served as its editor until 1951 when illness forced him to retire. A voracious reader, and an Old Testament scholar of distinction, Wyngaarden also was well known to strongly reject the influence of Higher Criticism on the Old Testament. The additions of Henry Schultze and Barend K. Kuiper to the faculty in 1926 and Diedrich H. Kromminga in 1928 (to replace Kuiper) likewise maintained a unity among the faculty with respect to the place of Higher Criticism.

Although the formidable economic ill-effects of the Great Depression briefly prevented some graduates from receiving calls from congregations, in general the decade of the 1930s was one of a new, more positive course for the seminary. In 1930, thanks to the generosity of the Hekman family, a separate seminary building was opened on the Calvin campus. And in 1931, Berkhof was chosen as the seminary's first president; previously the rectorship or head of the seminary had rotated among the faculty on an

annual basis. Their own facility and president allowed the seminary faculty to unify and deal with the pressing economic problems of the times.

The 1940s saw a number of changes at and for the seminary and the foundations being laid for another controversy that cleaved the faculty. William Hendriksen joined the faculty in 1942 to replace Schultze, who had become president of the college two years earlier. The next year William Rutgers came to replace the retiring Berkhof and George Stob came in 1947 at Kromminga's death. At Berkhof's retirement, Volbeda was appointed president.

With the end of the war a surge of students, a bit older than previously, came to the seminary. Many of these students had served in the military and experienced much outside the CRC. In the seminary they wanted a different pedagogical style than was in place and began to question the abilities of those faculty who insisted on lecturing from their established notes. Student criticism of such instruction grew, criticism that the faculty saw as impudent and perhaps also stained by trends in modern theology. Although there was no direct

evidence of the latter, the faculty began to keep a watchful eye.

Concurrently, but initially not directly related, a growing division developed between Hendriksen, Rutgers, Volbeda and Wyngaarden, and Bouma, Stob, and Harry Boer (who joined the faculty in 1949). The issue was the future course of seminary instruction. Following synodical instructions, the four faculty members



Groundbreaking for the seminary building on the Knollcrest campus in 1959. The shovel being held by John Kromminga was also used in the 1916 groundbreaking for the administration building on the Franklin Campus. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

presented a plan for a ThD program in 1949, but Bouma dissented, arguing that the library resources were inadequate to support such a program and the faculty was too small and ill-prepared for such a program. Separately, Stob and Boer also indicated their opposition to the proposal. Because the faculty was divided on the matter, the Board of Trustees took no action but the Synod of 1949 again endorsed the change in curriculum

Much of this was kept within the walls of the seminary, and because of decisions from the Board of Trustees, which was able to look past the personality dimensions in the debates, and with willingness on both sides, movement was made toward resolution of all these issues. This came to a sudden halt when questions were publicly raised about the theological soundness of a sermon delivered by one seminarian. Suddenly it seemed to

Wyngaarden was reappointed. Temporary appointments were made the next year to fill the vacancies and R.B. Kuiper was persuaded to come out of retirement to serve as the interim president. During the next several years students complained among themselves over the quality of instruction and the faculty seemed unsure of whether it should be more theologically conservative to answer critics from the denomination or more inclusive of current theological thought to answer student complaints.

By the end of the decade some resolution came to this faculty dilemma. In 1956 John H. Kromminga, appointed as professor of historical theology in 1952, was selected president. Kromminga saw the seminary as the theological leader of the denomination that, in turn, has the power to determine whether the direction being followed is correct. In his inaugural address he called for the seminary to both provide for the instruction of future ministers and be engaged in intense, reflective intellectual activity.⁹ In short, a balance had to be found between the two currents that had been in conflict at the seminary since Vos's tenure. According to Andrew Kuyvenhoven, Kromminga felt this was best achieved by "... trying to be an influence more through teaching students than through publishing daring books by its professors, more by cooperating with synodical committees than by seeking the limelight through individual theologians."¹⁰ For instance, he defended the right of students to discuss such issues as biblical inspiration and infallibility in *Stromata*, and defended those students when their doctrinal soundness was questioned.

One of his first major tasks as president was overseeing the construction of a new facility on a new campus. As part of the CRC centennial in 1957, the first groundbreaking on the



Calvin Theological Seminary on the Knollcrest campus. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

and directed the faculty to resolve their differences. The faculty became entangled in the debate, a debate that quickly took on personal and rancorous dimensions.

At the same time, unrelated student criticism of the teaching style of some of the faculty members, who happened to be part of the four supporting the ThD program, began to be voiced. In addition, the four faculty members, concerned about the abilities and/or theological soundness of some seniors, recommenced their licenses to exhort be rescinded. These matters further polarized the faculty, votes on these various questions typically yielding the same 4-3 split.

the denominational membership that the seminary was experiencing another crisis in orthodoxy. This concern received some credence from the fact that the previous year seven pre-seminary students had charged that several college professors were not thoroughly Reformed.⁸

Because there was a series of issues in the "seminary situation," as it came to be known, and the issues were so complex and included a fair measure of inter-faculty personality clashes, the 1952 Synod decided to recast the faculty. Bouma already had retired due to illness in 1951 and Volbeda retired because of age in 1952. Of the remaining five faculty members only

Knollcrest campus in 1959 was for a new seminary, which opened to students the next year. Although Kromminga continued to have to deal with controversy, the stridency of it diminished during the 1970s as the church and nation dealt with such other issues as civil disobedience and the fighting in Southeast Asia, and the denomination began to deal with the question of women in church office.

Although the seminary focused on training students for ministry positions through the new master of divinity program, graduate studies programs were also developed in church education, theological studies, and theology so that both currents could flow at the seminary. In addition, a specific program was designed for graduates of other seminaries who felt called to be CRC ministers. Through recruitment of able and trained faculty, instead of student complaints about the quality of instruction, by the 1980s the seminary had a reputation for its rigorous educational training and was attracting students from around the world. In addition, the seminary attracted women students, even though the denomination did not yet accept women to official church office positions. Due to the growth of the student body, the facilities had to be enlarged in 1975. Another measure of the institution's academic development was that at the end of Kromminga's presidency in 1983, the large majority of the faculty, now totaling sixteen people plus six adjunct appointments, had earned doctorate degrees.

In 1984 James A. De Jong was appointed president and set about

continuing the development of the institution's academic excellence as well as increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the students. By the end of the decade as many as thirty different nationalities were represented among the student body, particularly from Korea, Nigeria, and ethnic Chinese from a number of locations.

The number of women students reached twenty-nine in 1990. For women this time was particularly unsettling as the denomination repeatedly sought an answer to the question of whether women could hold church office. When the synodical decision in 1995 opened offices to women, these women found opportunities open in chaplaincy and educational positions, but not many were called to lead parish ministries. Although women had held adjunct appointments at the seminary for several decades, Dr. Ruth Tucker became the first woman to hold a full-time, regular appointment at the seminary in 2000.

Another trend during the 1980s was an increasing number of students applying to the seminary from undergraduate programs other than those provided by Calvin College. Concurrently, the college also saw its percentage of CRC students decline as a growing numbers of regional liberal arts colleges in the CRC sphere (Dordt, Trinity, Redeemer, etc.) offered alternatives to Reformed liberal arts education. Although initially both the college and seminary formed a single process to prepare candidates for ministry, by 1991 sufficient divergence of mission and direction and

purpose had developed that the decision was made to formally separate the two. Each received its own board of trustees, rather than reporting to the same board. As more seminary candidates sought their undergraduate training elsewhere and the college sought to become more diverse, including the membership of the board of trustees, a formal separation seemed the answer. Both continued to share the same campus and facilities such as the library.

The seminary continued to change and grow during the 1990s as more and more students came to the seminary from outside the CRC.¹¹ The curriculum was changed to meet new demands. A PhD program was added for those seeking scholarly research and the Specialized Program for Ministerial Candidacy was adapted so that the increasing number of non-CTS graduates wishing to be ordained ministers in the CRC could be accommodated.

Having celebrated its 125th anniversary last March 15, the seminary continues to work at attracting a diverse student body, presenting a varied curriculum solidly founded in the Reformed tradition that will prepare its students for ministry positions, and require annual multi-million-dollar budgets, all far cries from the one instructor, five students, and the twenty-one courses of 1876. The school, entering the twenty-first century with a new president, Cornelius Plantinga, still is focused on preparing its students for ministry and conducting research within a Reformed framework. ♣

Endnotes

1. Article 32, 1870 Acts of the General Assembly [later Synod] of the Christian Reformed Church. Archives Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. Cornelius Van Nuis, "Lammert Jan Hulst," *Origins* (vol. 17, no. 2 1999): 46-49.

3. L.J. Hulst, *Supra En Infra* (Grand Rapids: D.J. Doornik & Zoon, 1891). For an excellent account of this debate see: James D. Bratt, "Lammert J. Hulst: The Pastor as Leader in an Immigrant Community," in Hans Krabbendam and Larry J. Wagenaar, eds., *The Dutch American Experience: Essays in Honor of Robert P. Swierenga* (Amsterdam: Free University, 2000): 209-221.

4. 1894 Acts of Synod, 22-23.

5. Minutes of the Curatorium, Art. 18, 3 June 1903, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan (hereafter cited as Calvin Archives).

6. J.G. Vanden Bosch to B.K. Kuiper, 13 November 1904, B.K. Kuiper Collection, Calvin Archives.

7. For a detailed discussion of this issue see: James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984): 105-110 and James Y. Van Dyk, "The Janssen Case in Retrospect" unpublished manuscript, Calvin Archives.

8. The college event is generally referred to as "The Sacred Seven," but

other than the coincidence of sequence they were not directly related. For a fine discussion of this episode see: Fred M. Bultman, "The 'Sacred Seven,'" unpublished manuscript, 1996, Calvin Archives. Of course, the two episodes do indicate that the denomination was acutely on guard against doctrinal errors at its college and seminary.

9. John H. Kromminga, "Doing the Work of the Lord," *The Banner* (21 September 1956): 1161, 1180.

10. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, "Dr. John H. Kromminga: Twenty-five Years at the Seminary," *The Banner* (14 September 1981): 8.

11. In 2000, 8 percent of the seminary student body came from outside the CRC.

Calvin College: From Preparatory Program to Liberal Arts College

Harry Boonstra

Although the beginning of Calvin College is usually dated as March 15, 1876, this date is somewhat off the mark. The Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church (now Calvin Theological Seminary) officially began on that date, and since the theological students also received training in non-theological (liberal arts) subjects, one can perhaps date the genesis of Calvin College in 1876. It would be more accurate to see the beginning of the college as a process, whose seeds germinated in 1876.

A more pivotal year for the college is 1894, since the Theological School was then officially divided into a literary department and a theological department, and students other than aspiring ministers were admitted. In 1904 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church approved the establishment of a junior college, named John Calvin Junior College, in 1906. In 1908 the name was changed to Calvin College as the school continued to increase its course offerings. By September 1920, a full four-year program was in place and the first regular graduates received BA degrees in 1921. This broadening of the curriculum greatly affected the growth of the school. The Theological School had started with seven students in 1876, which had increased to forty by 1890. By 1920 the enrollment was as follows: Preparatory School (Academy), 268; College, 64; Theological School (Seminary), 34.

Such increases in the student population obviously presented space problems. In 1890 land had been purchased at the corner of Franklin

and Madison, and the board of trustees projected a new building of \$25,000—a colossal sum for a small immigrant community. The building was completed in 1892 and seemed sufficiently spacious to serve the school for many decades. But by 1910, because of the larger enrollment in the junior college curriculum, it was necessary for the trustees to purchase property for a new campus near the outskirts of the city at Franklin and Giddings. The first building there, completed in 1917, housed both the college and the seminary.

As the college grew, so did the level of organized student activities. The student newspaper, *Chimes*, first appeared in 1907 and has continued its (mostly illustrious) publication till today.

Indeed, much of the history of Calvin can be gleaned from the pages of *Chimes*. The college orchestra was born in 1904, various quartets and other musical groups frequently sang in area churches, and in 1923 a fledgling drama group sought to “place before both students and the public dramatic productions of a high moral character.”¹ Athletics and sports were at first viewed as a



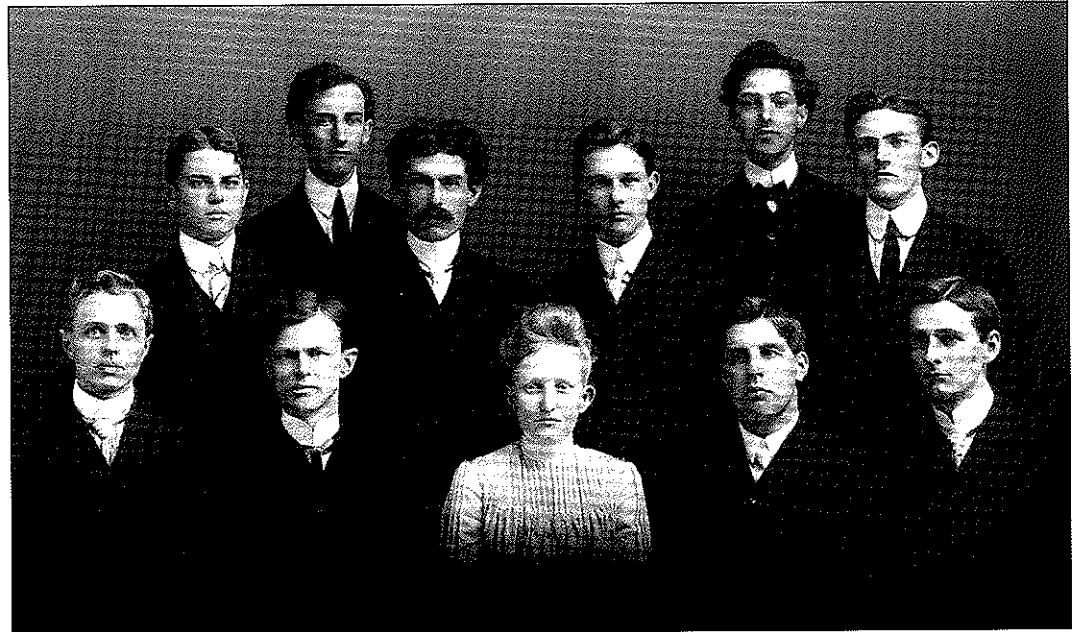
Beginning in 1894, A.J. Rooks was the long-time principal of the literary department of the Theological School. The department was expanded into a college which issued its first four-year degree in 1920. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

Harry Boonstra has earned several graduate degrees including a PhD from Loyola. An ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church since 1987, he is the emeritus theological librarian at Calvin Theological Seminary.

necessary evil, and basketball games with “outside groups” were frowned upon by the faculty.

Of course, with the increase in the number of students came an increase in the size of the faculty. But the faculty remained a relatively small number whose members taught a wide array of courses. The four instructors in 1900 had grown to only eleven full-time professors in 1919, each teaching various disciplines. For example, in 1900 B.K. Kuiper taught history, German, and natural science; in the 1919-20 school year J. Van Haitsema was scheduled to teach zoology, botany, and embryology in the college, as well as geography, general science, physiology, agriculture, and geography in the preparatory school.

All of this was done because the members of the Christian Reformed denomination held various reasons for providing a “Calvinistic” college education for their youth who were not preparing for the ministry. The first non-ministerial applicants for whom such an education was deemed necessary were potential school teachers. Since these teachers would be instructing in the Christian schools, they needed appropriate training steeped in the faith of the membership. In addition, the church argued, those young people not going into either the ministry or teaching should also have opportunity for higher education—but education that was safe: “We need a school for our young people, a school to which we can confidently entrust our sons and daughters, so that they will not be drenched in the poison of all kinds of errors.”² Thus the desire grew to have young people receive an advanced education in a protected environment that would enhance their



The graduating class of 1905, with the first woman graduate, Helen Poelstra. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

spiritual growth, from thoroughly Reformed teachers (not that this latter motivation was unique to the Christian Reformed).

There was also another important reason for the promotion of a four-year college. B.K. Kuiper, an early and ardent champion for Calvin College, wrote a comprehensive rationale for a college education in 1903. His vision deserves to be quoted at some length:

We can now finally also see our calling a little more completely. Not only as citizens of the State, but also as members of the Church, it is our calling to participate in all the activities of national life . . . As members of the Christian Reformed Church we find our bulwark in our Reformed Confession, in the principles of Calvinism. We are to show ourselves everywhere as *Calvinistic Americans* . . .

Everybody will now see clearly how the life of the church, the state, and society demand learning higher than can be taught in either the grammar or the High School, so that we cannot do without the College. But if this higher learning is necessary then we need the

College also for its own sake. Then the College must train the men who later are to become teachers in the College. Then we need the College, with its libraries, museums, and laboratories, as the conservatory of learning. We need the College as an intellectual center. The College is needed in order that the opportunity be provided for men to devote their whole lives, without worry, to the cause of learning, the advancement of science.³

This aspiration was a noble vision for “the liberal arts”—although one wonders if the farmer, toiling to clear his field of tree stumps, could muster much enthusiasm for a vision of museums and intellectual centers. But such a person certainly saw the importance of properly trained ministers and teachers.

One of the more expansive treatments of this theme appeared at Calvin’s semi-centennial celebration in 1926 by Louis Berkhof, long-time professor at the seminary. Borrowing from John Calvin and especially Abraham Kuyper, he propounded what has often been repeated since:

There is still another consideration.

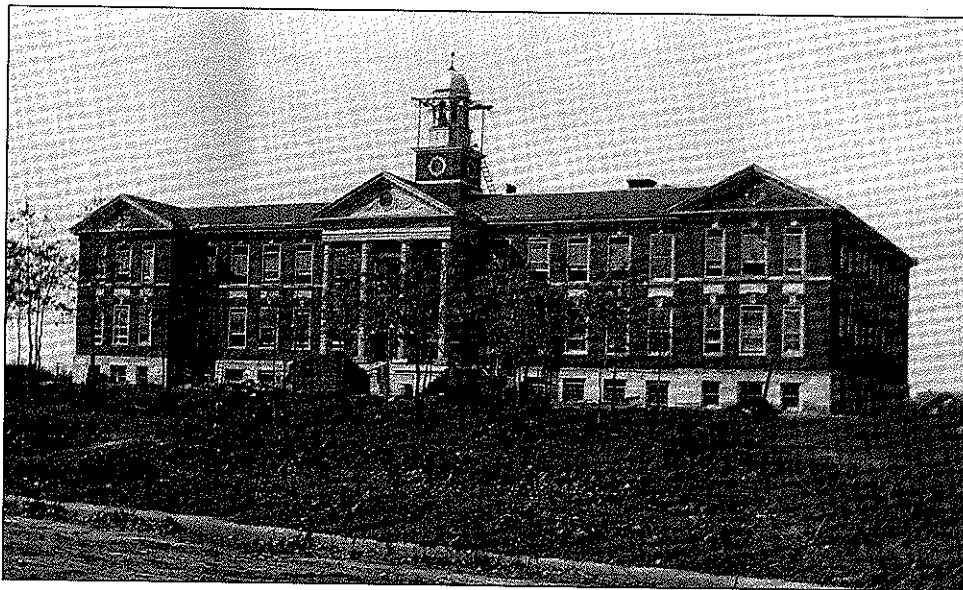
Calvinism is not merely a system of doctrine—in fact, in that sense the name may be considered a misnomer; it is also a view of the world and of life in general It is only through the instrumentality of high class agencies of education that a comprehensive system like Calvinism can be expounded and developed and propagated and exhibited in all its bearings on practical life. Moreover, it calls for schools that honour the Word of God as a light also on the pathway of science, and that make the principles of the Reformed faith fundamental in all their teachings; schools in which religion is the leaven that leaveneth the whole lump.⁴

As much as the vision of B.K. Kuiper and Louis Berkhof was an underlying principle that guided the decisions, another factor was at work as well—university prerequisites and the accreditation of each program by the University of Michigan. As students applied for further study (at various universities, often the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago), they often discovered lacunae in their Calvin education, and they urged the college to prepare its students more adequately. Thus, in addition to seeking to provide a nurturing spiritual environment in a Reformed, Calvinistic perspective, there also was the reality of American academic life that shaped the college and its curriculum.

Thus far we have examined the beginnings, 1876-1914, and years of

transition into a four-year liberal arts college, 1914-1920, of the college. The next period, 1920-1945, had a profound impact on shaping the character of the school.

The period began with two significant changes. Even though the United States did not enter World War I till spring 1917, the Great War did greatly affect American life. For the Dutch immigrant communities the impact of the war diminished their (self-imposed) isolation from American



Construction of the Calvin administration building on the Franklin campus nears completion in 1918. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

national life and hastened the Americanization process. Language was one important aspect of this process. Since the war produced violent anti-German emotion in America, the Dutch (and the Dutch language) were often confused with Germany, and the use of Dutch, long the bulwark of the denomination, was forcibly curtailed.

As important as the change in language for the college, was the appointment of its first president in 1919. Up to this time the administration had been largely in the hands of the faculty and duties rotated among the faculty (with the Curatorium and trustees at times second-guessing the

faculty). The appointment of Rev. John J. Hiemenga (no consideration was given to any non-clergy candidate) as president to take charge of the ongoing, day-to-day business affairs of the college marked another step in the process of the former department in a theological school becoming an "Americanized college."

Because of this, the life of Calvin College during these decades must be seen in the context of American life and culture. All I can do here is allude

to the social and moral upheavals of the 1920s-1940s, which include the Great Depression and World War II. Moreover, the denominational life of the CRC experienced some of its most stressful times in the 1920s. Certainly the lives of faculty and students were greatly affected and conditioned by these events.

During this period the first five presidents of

the College also made their mark. A brief paragraph about each will have to suffice.

Hiemenga was chosen president (1919-25) because he was a well-known minister, a fine preacher, and an engaging leader, who had a good track record of overseeing building projects in the congregations he had served. One of his achievements was the elimination of the Preparatory School, which became Grand Rapids Christian High School, and he was the first to give shape to the office of the president. This shaping did not come without considerable struggle. The faculty had been accustomed to

directing most affairs of the college and they grudgingly gave up some of their authority. Hiemenga also undertook the task of all American college presidents—raising funds; he successfully garnered the funds for the building of the first dormitory/gymnasium, completed in 1924.

When Hiemenga returned to pastoral work, the trustees appointed Johannes Broene, professor of psychology, as the acting president for one year. In fact, the appointment lasted five years. The faculty appreciated Broene because he did not curtail their authority and the board had confidence in him. Growth in the student body was due partly to the

require his ministerial, but rather administrative, skills. He noted in his resignation: "I have learned that the work of the president is necessarily in very large measure administrative. I question whether it is the proper work of a minister of the Gospel. Surely the position does not require a minister."⁵ Needless to say, the next two presidents were ordained clergymen. During Kuiper's administration the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools gave its first formal approval to Calvin College and its programs.

President Kuiper also had the unenviable opportunity to oversee the reduction of faculty salaries—and even

has not been reopened since the banking holiday. Our impounded account is equal to what is owing on salaries. When, how, and whether this account will be released is very uncertain."⁶

During Kuiper's tenure there also were a number of serious problems that were "simmering." These problems tended to cluster around the question whether Calvin College was clearly and consistently a Calvinistic, (Christian) Reformed college. Student behavior was questioned because of some of the student writing in *Chimes* and especially because of student movie attendance. The teaching of some professors was suspect and there was concern about the increasing number of non-CRC students.

Some of these issues came to a head during the presidency of Ralph Stob (1933-39). Stob had been a popular professor of Greek at the college, but proved to be less congenial as a president. He took seriously the mandate of the board to guarantee that the college be thoroughly Reformed in both teaching and life-style. The life-style issue that proved most contentious for Stob was student attendance at movies and the predicament of the administration and faculty instructed to prevent such attendance. Stob assumed an aggressive posture in dealing with this and other student infractions and found the students less than enthusiastic about his policies. In spite of complaints about Stob, the board decided to reappoint him in 1936, noting: "The present unrest in faculty and student body in regard to the present administration can be settled, if the board of trustees stands firmly behind the president."⁷ However, by 1939 the unrest had achieved such level that the president was not reappointed.

Administratively the following year was bizarre. Broene was again asked to serve as acting president for one year.



The women's basketball team in 1921. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

increased number of women students—an increase that necessitated the appointment in 1926 of the first "adviser to the girls," Johanna Timmer.

R.B. Kuiper, the next president (1930-33), was again a popular preacher, who soon discovered that the office of president did not really

those reduced salaries were at times in arrears during the Great Depression. The appalling economic conditions of the times can be gauged by a few sentences from President Kuiper's 1933 financial report: "To be sure, we are two months in arrears in the payment of salaries, but that is due to the fact that the Grand Rapids Savings Bank

He acquiesced reluctantly, and only as a caretaker administrator. More power was wielded by the committee of ten appointed by synod to investigate both students and faculty at the college. This committee acted with great ardor and tried to remake the college in short order. The main item of contention was, again, movie attendance. The faculty chafed under the suspicion and the peremptory methods of the committee, especially when the committee took it upon themselves to recommend the name of the next president.

This contentious period came to an end with the appointment of Rev. Henry Schultze as president (1939-51). Schultze was a professor at the seminary and a respected voice in the denomination. In terms of the issues raised during the 1920s and 1930s, his presidency was in many ways a harmonious one. Of course, in other respects, it was also a difficult time, as he steered the college through the war and post-war years.

The war had a deep impact on the college, as it did on all of American life. The most noticeable was the drop in male students; women students actually moved into the men's dormitory, while the men moved to smaller quarters. The total enrollment in 1941 was 520, and by 1944 it had declined to 420. But Schultze's greatest test came two years later when the school had to cope with an enrollment that had risen to 1,245.

In spite of the challenges during the period, student life went its way—often unaware of or uninterested in the issues that concerned presidents and professors. *Prism* was



Queen Juliana of the Netherlands with President William Spoelhof during her visit to the Calvin campus as part of her tour of the United States in 1952. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

first published in 1920 and dutifully chronicled the diverse clubs and organizations, from the Blotter to the Phytozoon Clubs. Debate and oration flourished in the 1930s. Peter De Vries, Frederick Feikema, later Manfred, Meindert and David C. De Jong (all of whom later became nationally known authors) sharpened their writing talents at the college during these two decades. The Girls' Glee Club was founded in 1925, and women students started moving into "coops" (cooperative houses) in 1940. Pre-seminary students struggled through their 19 hours of Dutch (plus a required course in Dutch history), 20 hours of Greek, 14 hours of Latin, and 8 hours of German. The growth of athletics and competitive sports was also welcomed. Men's basketball had not had an auspicious start—in 1920 they lost their first game against Hope College 30-13. Moreover, the rivalry between the two schools was fierce, "One of the first intercollegiate games with Hope was followed by such a destructive aftermath—defacing property, raucous verbal exchange,

and the crunch of fists—that competition was temporarily abandoned."⁸

And, of course, paying tuition was a constant challenge. Here geography made a difference. The more distant the student's home residence, the lower the tuition rate. For instance, students residing west of the Mississippi River but east of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico, paid \$33.50 per semester; for two students from one family residing in this region, the tuition was \$27 a semester, each.⁹ From the perspective of 2001 the amount might seem ridiculously

low, but to families of the Depression—who had just lost their farms such amounts were often beyond reach. But in spite of the hardships families continued to send their children to study.

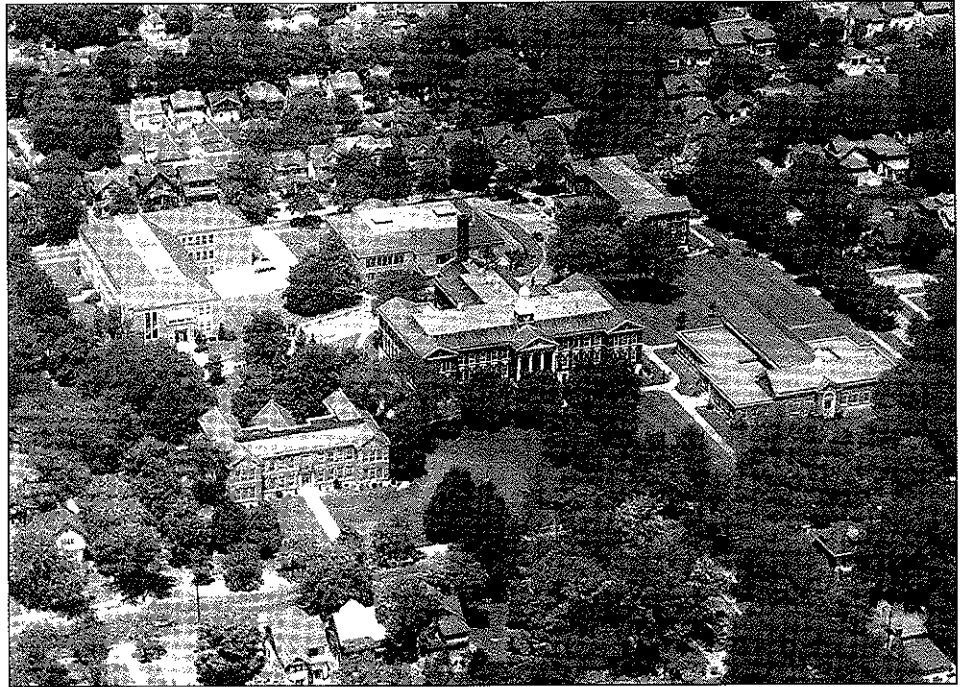
The end of World War II saw the beginning of growth and change of the college that continues to the present. The chief development was the dramatic enrollment increase. In 1945 Calvin had 503 students, which grew to 1,245 by 1946. A few sentences from the president's report in February 1947 demonstrate the burden for the administration: "... shortage of faculty members, a shortage of classroom facilities, a shortage of housing. . . The provision of proper eating facilities for our students was also a major problem. . . The faculty of Calvin has been burdened with exceedingly heavy loads . . . , but there was no grumbling. The use of the library has tripled." Various arrangements were made during the initial years of higher enrollment, including major construction projects of a science buildings and student

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commons. But by 1954 the board decided to halt further building until a master plan for campus expansion could be developed.

William Spoelhof, professor of history at Calvin since 1946, became president in September 1951 and remained in office till 1976. John Timmerman captures Spoelhof's contribution well: "He has been an uncommonly gifted president during uncommonly difficult years."¹⁰ No doubt part of these "difficult years" was an issue he inherited from spring 1951, when seven pre-seminary students (soon dubbed "The Sacred Seven") asserted that "man is being enthroned at Calvin College, rather than God," and accused six faculty members of various kinds of secularism.¹¹

Charges of student misconduct were



The Franklin campus home to both the college and seminary (building in the lower left) for four decades. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.



The Knollcrest farm property became home to the seminary in 1961 and the college completed its move there in 1973. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

also rife. The (perennial) issue of students succumbing to worldly amusements continued to be a source of contention. The college administration was finally relieved of the burden of supervising students' movie atten-

dance with a 1966 synodical decision. The "moving picture theatre," the "shows," the "movies" were re-baptized as "film arts" and "legitimate cultural mediums" which could be used with discrimination.

Enrollments topped 2,000 in 1959; 3,000 in 1966 and was 3,915 when Spoelhof retired in 1976. Through it all, Spoelhof also focussed on improving the salaries and academic credentials of the faculty as the school continued to grow. Raising the funding for new buildings and additional faculty was challenging, but with able assistants such as John Vanden Berg, Henry De Wit, and Syd Youngsma the academic and financial challenges to growth were successfully met.

The 1960s and 1970s were also years of political and social upheavals for the United States, and although Calvin students did not engage in riots and bra-burnings, the atmosphere on campus was often tense, and the constituency found much wanting in student behavior. All of this culminated in the voluminous archival file of letters from President Spoelhof's tenure, dealing with the *Bananer* episode—the student spoof of the denominational magazine *The Banner*, in 1970. The constituents'

frustration with Calvin seemed to become crystallized by this clever but irreverent bit of journalism and a great deal of effort was needed to quiet critics, although some critics were not assuaged.

A major, ongoing effort in Spoelhof's administration was moving campus to a new location. By 1954 it was clear that the college could expand no further on the Franklin campus, and the board investigated various land purchasing and relocation plans. In 1956 the denomination purchased the 166-acre Knollcrest estate on the outskirts of the city, and heard the anguished cries of many in the constituency, about so much space and so much money. (The \$9 million projected cost for the property and a future campus seemed a staggering sum). But the college and seminary moved forward. The seminary building was completed in 1960 and the seminary moved from the Franklin campus. The college's library-classroom building was built in 1962 and the college operated (inconveniently) with a split campus till 1973. In the interim, construction of new buildings continued apace.

Anthony Diekema, who was associate chancellor of the University of Illinois Medical Center, assumed the presidency in Calvin's centennial year and served until 1995. The building program continued during his tenure. So did an incredible amount of fund raising. These efforts climaxed in the "Campaign for Calvin," which at its conclusion in 1996 had raised more than \$58 million.

Significant scholarly development can be seen in the institution of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship (1977), the Multi-Cultural Lectureship (1980), the H.H. Meeter Center for Calvin Studies (1982), and the beginning of an MA in Christian Studies. The Multi-Cultural Lectureship was an attempt to give more visibility to minority groups both in North America and worldwide. This effort was part of a comprehensive plan to have Calvin become a more ethnically diverse institution, both in student body and faculty. Included in this plan was Mosaic, a \$3 million campaign for a multi-cultural endowment, as well as a Minority Graduate Fellowship Program. These programs bore fruit, but the percentage of minority students and faculty remained very small. Ideologically the curriculum became more self-consciously "Kuyperian," as the faith-and-learning emphasis drew heavily on the tradition of Abraham Kuyper.

In terms of keeping the students in check, Diekema's administration was aided by a series of synodical decisions and a major report on dance, which (as the Film Arts report had in 1966)

changed the terminology and rhetoric, so that now dance was to be seen as "an area of human life to be brought under the lordship of Christ." But there continued to be collisions between students and administration. In 1977 Diekema banned the showing of *A Clockwork Orange*, and controversies with the Film Arts Committee continued, as films such as *Taxi Driver* and *Oh, God!* were shown on campus. However, Diekema's most crucial tussle was not about student conduct, but about faculty teaching and writing, especially the controversy about creation and evolution, which included the bizarre accusation that Diekema was one of the four horsemen in the Book of Revelation. Diekema weathered the various storms and retired in 1995.

The arrival in 1995 of Gaylen Byker as the next president signaled a change in direction for the presidency. Spoelhof and Diekema, who together had served for forty-four years, were both professional academicians, whereas Byker's professional career was largely in the business sector. No doubt one factor in this selection was the awareness that American college

presidents spend much of their time raising funds—and a person from the business world would be able to provide the financial leadership. President Byker soon proved his financial acumen. In 1998 the college received two grants of \$10 million for campus expansion—one building to be a new facility for communications and the other for a conference center. A year later the John "Doc" De Vries Hall



Main entrance to the William Spoelhof College Center. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

of Science, to be used especially for medical education and research, was completed.

Several new programs were also begun. In 1998 the Paul B. Henry Institute and Chair in Christianity and Politics was founded, as was the Institute for Christian Worship, co-sponsored by Calvin Theological Seminary. Pathways to Possibilities, a community outreach program, initially funded by the Kellogg Foundation, allowed Calvin to partner with Grand Rapids inner city churches, with the special aim to keep youths in school. Two other programs that have flourished in recent years are the January Series of prominent lecturers and the Festival of Faith and Writing.

Of course, not all of campus life is new buildings or new programs. In addition to academic requirements, students had to deal with issues previously more typical in the larger society such as rape, unexpected pregnancies, and suicide. Controversial issues from the larger community also led to discussions and disagreements on homosexuality. Some students took a lively interest in all of the issues just mentioned. Others were more exercised about the increasing prohibitions on smoking. And all students took great comfort from the 1999 *Chimes* headline: "Historic Hope streak broken. Calvin beats Hope for the first time in five years." No one at

Calvin needed to be reminded that the reference was to a basketball game.

Calvin has changed much in the past 125 years. Its student body is no longer overwhelmingly Christian Reformed; in fact in the current academic year only one-half of the students are from the denomination. Nor is it still the preparatory program for Calvin Theological Seminary, the majority of whose students have graduated from a college other than Calvin. But Calvin still strives to present a quality liberal arts education in the context of the Reformed faith. §

[This essay is a condensed version of Chapter 3 of the author's recently published Our School: Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and the RCA Historical Series). This overview of Calvin College has often singled out presidents and their achievements (and agonies). It goes without saying that such a focus does great injustice to hundreds of staff and faculty, as well as thousands of students. Those professors and students in many ways are Calvin College. To do full justice to that part of Calvin College, the reader should consult the following titles: John J. Timmerman, Promises to Keep, Henry Ryskamp, Offering Hearts, Shaping Lives, and Harry Boonstra, Our School: Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church.]

Endnotes

1. *Calvin College Prism*, 1923, p. 69.
2. J. Schepers, "Een College," *De Wachter*, March 4, 1896, p. 2.
3. B.K. Kuiper, *The Proposed Calvinistic College at Grand Rapids* (Grand Rapids: Sevensma, 1903), pp. 40, 50.
4. Louis Berkhof, "Our School's Reason for Existence and the Preservation Thereof," *Semi-Centennial Volume, Theological School and Calvin College 1876-1926* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 1926), pp. 130-131.
5. Board of Trustees Minutes, 1933, Article 108, located in the Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
6. Board of Trustees Minutes, 1933, Article 44. The winter of 1932/1933 saw the economy hit its lowest point during the depression.
7. Board of Trustees Minutes, 1935, Article 122.
8. John J. Timmerman, *Promises to Keep: A Centennial History of Calvin College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) p. 65.
9. *Calvin College Year Book*, 1934-1935, p. 15.
10. Timmerman, p. 162.
11. Henry Ryskamp, *Offering Hearts, Shaping Lives: A History of Calvin College, 1876-1966*, ed. Harry Boonstra (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 2000) pp. 134-136.

Northwestern College

Earl William Kennedy

Most of the academies and colleges born in the nineteenth century did not survive infancy. One major factor in the success of those that did is an enduring sense of purpose—a vision transcending mere town pride or local boosterism common at the founding of such endeavors. One school with such a mission is Northwestern College of Orange City, in the northwest corner of Iowa. Incorporated in 1882 and officially opened in 1883, Northwestern grew slowly but steadily from a classical academy to a college preparatory school for ministers, to a teacher-training junior college, to a four-year liberal arts college. Throughout it has maintained its commitment to an evangelical expression of the Reformed faith.

When Dutch Calvinism came to the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, it came with a zeal for the education of covenant children as well as for the training of a learned and godly ministry. Albertus C. Van Raalte founded the Holland Academy to prepare young men for Rutgers College and New Brunswick Theological Seminary. His efforts to establish Christian day schools met with little success. One of Van Raalte's disciples was Seine Bolks (1814-1894), the first pastor of Orange City's First Reformed Church and one of Northwestern's founders. He had received little formal education before spending a year studying for the ministry in Van Raalte's parsonage in the Netherlands and was an enthusiastic backer of and fund raiser for his mentor's educational projects during his thirty years serving American congregations in

Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

Bolks carried the model of Holland Academy with him when he came to lead the Orange City congregation in 1872. Due to a grasshopper plague, founding of the school had to wait until Bolks retired as the pastor in 1878. Led by Bolks, the congregation provided the infant academy with its



Henry Hospers, the "father of Orange City," a booster for Northwestern College. Image: Archives, Calvin College.

chief financial and other support and its auditorium held the school's larger, public meetings, such as commencement exercises. The congregation and its subsequent pastors have continuously played a key role in Northwestern's fortunes until today.

Co-founder with Bolks of Northwestern was Henry Hospers (1830-1901), the "father of Orange City." Hospers was a multi-talented Reformed layman, who had emigrated to Pella, Iowa in 1848, the year after it was settled. The son of a school teacher, Hospers had taught school for a short

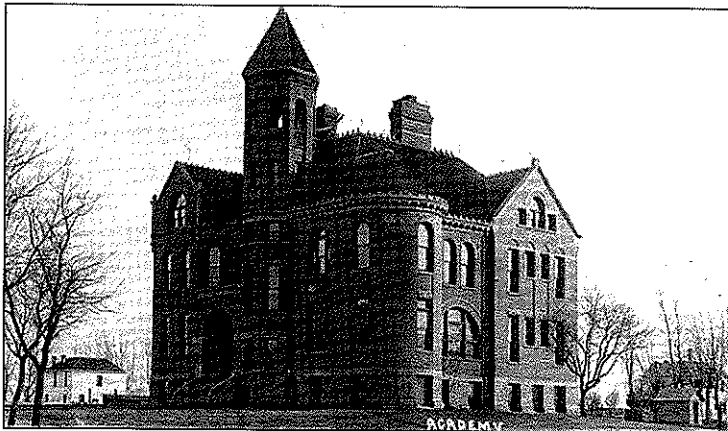
Earl William Kennedy holds a ThD from Princeton Theological Seminary and served on the faculty of Northwestern College, 1963-1998. A student of the Dutch in Orange City, he is an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America.

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time before entering various business enterprises and becoming Pella's mayor. He witnessed the founding of Central College in 1853 and the failure of Van Raalte's effort to set up Christian day schools in Pella just prior to the American Civil War.

After the war Hospers was instrumental in establishing a subsequent Dutch-American settlement to the northwest, in Sioux County. Soon after moving to Orange City, he became the town's chief banker, a state legislator, and a great propagandist for that community. He used his considerable persuasive powers to attract more Dutch settlers to the area. Further, he gave much of the land for Northwestern Classical Academy and served as the first treasurer of the school's board of trustees. Orange City, the community that Hospers started in agriculturally rich Sioux County, was, of course, also a crucial factor in Northwestern's success.

Like the Holland Academy, Northwestern would have been stillborn



Home to Northwestern Classical Academy. Photo: Archives, Northwestern College.

without financial support from the eastern Reformed Church in America (RCA). The academy was incorporated in 1882, the RCA General Synod conclusively rejected the repeated midwestern appeals to exclude members of oath-bound secret societies, such as the Freemasons, from the

denomination. Although the decision caused some Michigan RCA churches to secede, Sioux County's Reformed congregations generally did not view the Freemasonry movement as a threat. Instead they saw an urgent need for eastern financial support for church extension work among the growing number of scattered Dutch settlers in the Midwest. Because of distance, not all wished to attend Holland Academy so that Synod also urged the establishment of other college-preparatory schools overseen by the RCA Board of Education. This board, together with a few wealthy eastern RCA laypersons, provided frequent help to Northwestern in the early years.

RCA denominational support for education had begun at mid-century with a brief flurry of interest in Christian day schools. The movement died out by about 1870, except for some support for Christian day schools among immigrants and blacks. Accordingly, the chief recipients of RCA education funds by the end

of the century were the academies, which served primarily as sources for ministers for the midwestern immigrant congregations. Thus Holland and Northwestern academies were joined by Pleasant Prairie Academy at German Valley, Illinois (1894), Wisconsin Memorial Academy at

Cedar Grove, Wisconsin (1900), Dakota Classical Academy, "the Harvard of the West," at Harrison, South Dakota (1902), and Central College Academy (taken over from the Baptists in 1916). Similar institutions were attempted by the Christian Reformed Church at Hull, Iowa



An early home in Orange City, Iowa. Photo: Archives, Northwestern College.

(1912), and at Grundy Center, Iowa (1916).

When Northwestern Classical Academy was incorporated on 1 August 1882, it took its name from the entire area north and west of Chicago, then simply known as "the Northwest." The founders' vision was to establish a college preparatory school, especially for future RCA ministers and missionaries, who would come for their preliminary training to Orange City as the hub of present-day Iowa, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

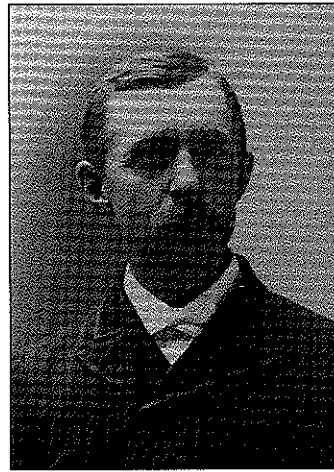
As with other academies of the time, Northwestern provided instruction in Latin and Greek, hence the name classical, and a wider range of education beyond the primary level. But since it was under the control of the local RCA classis, (regional governing body) its goal was to prepare future ministers for entrance into Hope College and eventually Western Theological Seminary. Further, it was an "academy." These days, such instruction might be seen as compa-

nable to what a college-preparatory program does in a high school.

Northwestern maintained close ties with Hope College for many years, by sending not only pre-seminarians but also future lawyers, doctors, teachers, businessmen, and homemakers for further training in West Michigan. Many of Northwestern's early instructors were ministers, who were graduates of Hope and Western. All but one of the eight principals of the academy, prior to adding a junior college in 1928, were Hope graduates, and the exception had attended Hope prior to graduating elsewhere. Similarly, six of these individuals were ordained RCA ministers who had graduated from Western Theological Seminary. The Hope College alumni connection continued, including during the twentieth century a significant minority of Northwestern faculty and three presidents, Jacob Heemstra, Preston Stegenga, and James Bultman. These days the connection has developed in another direction with Northwestern faculty joining Hope, the most recent and visible instance Bultman's accepting Hope's presidency in 1999.

The Orange City academy began with a recent Hope College graduate, Jacob J. Van Zanten (1858-1908), Orange City's elementary school principal, as the pioneer instructor. In 1881 Van Zanten had begun tutoring a few advanced students "in languages and other higher branches." Thus, when the academy formally opened on 23 September 1883, it could boast a student body of about two dozen enrolled in two upper classes in addition to the freshman class. Van Zanten was aided by two local RCA pastors who taught part-time, and served first as the academy's acting, and from January 1884 onward as permanent, principal. He continued at the school until 1887, when he left to attend Western Theological Seminary.

When Van Zanten became the



James F. Zwemer, principal of Northwestern, 1890-1898 led the debt-burdened school through the economic depression that began in 1893. Photo: Archives, Northwestern College.

permanent principal in January 1884 the full-time staff had grown to two and began to offer a standard four-year curriculum. The faculty grew to three in 1885, the year of the first graduating class—three men. The next year the faculty grew to four, including two unmarried women, and the graduating class to seven, five men and two women.

Rev. James Frederick Zwemer (1850-1921) came as the second principal in 1890 and served eight years. He was the older brother of four RCA missionaries, including the famous "Apostle to Islam," Samuel M. Zwemer. James Zwemer was an experienced pastor and church money raiser. By the time he became principal, the enrollment had grown to around seventy students, with a faculty of four or five, including the principal. These numbers remained roughly this size until World War I.

In an effort to attract more students, modern classical and normal curricula were added to the classical program during the 1890s. The normal courses were for prospective teachers, especially women, who generally taught the area elementary schools from

graduation until marriage. The declared intent of this curriculum was to provide Protestant teachers for the public schools, and thereby keep the schools out of Roman Catholic hands. This made for diverse alumni, as indicated in a 1901 principal's report noting that of the school's 187 graduates, 28 became teachers; 23 went into business; 39 were or planned to be lawyers and doctors; and 58 "have dedicated their lives to the gospel ministry. Twenty-four of these are already in the field, nineteen are now in theological seminaries, and fifteen are pursuing collegiate studies with the same glorious activities in view. Thirty per cent of the product of the school is being utilized by the Church in the blessed work of the ministry."

Despite relatively stable student enrollment, Northwestern struggled financially until nearly 1910, requiring frequent monetary bailouts from the eastern donors and repeated canvassing of the local constituency. Zwemer led the fight to bring financial viability to the debt-ridden school during the severe financial crisis of the 1890s. He came very close to complete exhaustion in carrying the combined burdens of administration, teaching (Bible, history, science, and Dutch), fund raising, and preaching (in Dutch, English, and German). Faculty salaries were \$2,500 in arrears in 1897, just before the national economy began to improve. To keep the institution open, Zwemer lent it \$600 of his own money.

The enlarged curriculum of the 1890s required proper classrooms and a good library. So Zwemer oversaw the erection of Northwestern's first really permanent building in 1894, Academy Hall, renamed Zwemer Hall in 1924, which was expanded and restored in 1997, now serving as the college's administrative center. Academy Hall housed classrooms, a chapel, and the Rapelye Library, the result of the

donation by a wealthy New York woman. In 1898 Zwemer returned to the pastorate and later served Western Theological Seminary as its financial agent and finally as professor.

Thomas Evert "Tossie" Welmers (1874-1947) was Northwestern's longest serving principal, from 1910-20. Under him the school experienced its "golden age." A thoroughgoing academic, he spent his entire career in the classroom, unlike the school's other ordained principals. Although he never had a parish pastorate, he was a good preacher and gifted organist. He did not care for fund raising, but Northwestern faced no financial emergencies during his tenure.

Graduating from Hope College in 1903, Welmers received his theological degree from the premier American Calvinist theological seminary of the time, Princeton, in 1906. Two study years followed at Princeton and the University of Berlin, after which he began teaching Greek, Latin, and Bible at Northwestern.

Given his training, it is not surprising that during his decade as principal he championed academic rigor, classroom discipline, and the liberal arts, even in the face of the rising tide of educational pragmatism and spectator sports. Typical is his first report to the RCA General Synod in 1911, in which he complained that "The false notion still prevails with some that attending school is play." Moreover, Welmers was influenced by the thought of Abraham Kuyper and promoted the integration of faith and learning. In his 1912 report, Welmers said, "In so far as they lend themselves to it, we strive to relate instruction in all branches to Christian truth."

Welmers's appreciation of Kuyper may have been related to the offer made by Northwestern's board of trustees in 1911 to give the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), increasingly



The faculty and staff about 1910 with principal Thomas E. Welmers in the center. Photo: Archives, Northwestern College.

influenced by Kuyper, just under half of the positions on the board; the offer was declined. In 1919, when Northwestern had begun to attract a significant minority of Christian Reformed students, members of the CRC began their own, rival academy in nearby Hull, Iowa, to the chagrin of, among others, Effie Zwier, one of Welmers's Christian Reformed faculty colleagues, who wrote an article in the local paper opposing the new school.

Another significant development during his tenure was the growth of inter-mural athletics. Welmers noted in his 1917 report to the General Synod that the academy needed a gymnasium, since boys' and girls' basketball, first mentioned in the 1905-6 principal's reports, had to be played in the town hall. But in his final report in 1920, he laments that "as in other places, so here, the reaction of the war has been felt; and it appears in an uncontrollable desire for play. . . . This has affected the quantity and quality of the work done." Welmers is presumably alluding to the boom in inter-mural, spectator sports (much facilitated by automobiles and buses), especially basketball, which would characterize the "Roaring Twenties" and result in the construction of many gymnasiums. For instance,

Northwestern's 1924 Science Hall (renamed Van Peurse Hall when augmented in 1952) contained an auditorium for basketball games and/or chapel.

Even though few of his students were old enough to serve in the armed forces, the war was as much a watershed event for the academy, Welmers felt, as it was for the nation. In 1920

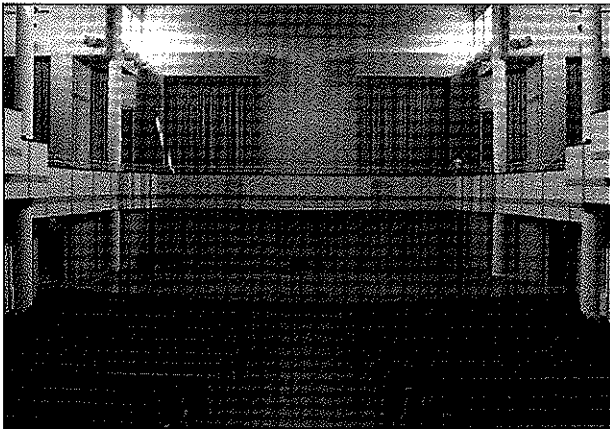
Welmers and all but one of the faculty left Northwestern. Welmers returned to his alma mater, Hope College, where he served for the next twenty-five years as professor of Greek and registrar.

Faculty turnover had been and would be a problem for many years, and was probably related to heavy teaching loads and low salaries; the latter may also help explain why women were the majority on the academy's faculty after about 1910. Throughout most of the 1920s the school's larger enrollment, which had begun in 1917, continued, but this was mostly due to a shift to a more practical emphasis on training teachers for the immediate job market instead of preparing ministers and others for college. Furthermore, inter-mural sports and other extra-curricular activities gained an ever-larger role at Northwestern, as elsewhere. In 1928, the faculty requested that teaching the Heidelberg Catechism be dropped from the curriculum, "because it was too heavy."

With the addition of Northwestern Junior College in 1928, the academy took something of a back seat, although during much of its last three decades it still had its own principals. Whereas in 1909 almost three-quarters

of the students were out-of-towners, by the 1930s the academy was not much more than a local high school. The classical and modern classical programs were dropped in the 1940s, and during the academy's final decade, the 1950s, Christian Reformed students outnumbered the Reformed.

Furthermore, the RCA General Synod of 1957, in response to the Supreme Court decision about Bible reading and prayer in public schools, distributed, for every pastor to study, a Board of Education report endorsing the public school system and criticizing parochial education. In any event, the public high school in Orange City ignored the Supreme Court's ruling for many years. The academy had lost the battle for students with the local



Chapel in Academy Hall. Photo, Archives, Northwestern College.

public high school, which offered a similar curriculum, taught (tuition-free) by Christian teachers. Having lost its original purpose and been overshadowed by the junior college, the academy graduated its final class in 1961, the year the four-year college graduated its first class.

Rev. Jacob Heemstra (1888-1958), was the driving force behind Northwestern Junior College, 1928-59. Old time alumni eagerly repeat stories of his courage and sacrifice to keep Northwestern alive in the face of the daunting challenges of the Great

Depression and World War II. An Orange City native and a graduate of the academy, Hope College, and Western Seminary (after a year at Princeton), Heemstra had a four-year pastorate in Chicago, when he did graduate study at the University of Chicago. From 1918 to 1928 he first taught education and then Bible at Central College in Pella, Iowa. He was also college registrar and briefly in 1925 acting president. He came back to Orange City in 1928 as the ninth principal of the academy and the first president of Northwestern Junior College.

The academy's supporters, not least Orange City's business community, had sensed that without the addition of a two-year college the academy

might not survive, because of competition from public high schools. After considerable lobbying from Northwestern's backers, the 1928 RCA General Synod approved junior college status, although some wondered if this would adversely affect Hope and Central Colleges. Full accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools came two years later.

Then the impact of the Great Depression began to be felt. Northwestern's financial support crumbled, and academy enrollment declined, although the junior college student numbers remained encouraging. As the school faced its "darkest hour," the RCA Board of Education suggested that Northwestern close temporarily, but Heemstra and the board of trustees rejected this out of hand. To deal with the lack of funds, faculty salaries were progressively cut during the 1930s, and for several years even these reduced salaries were not

paid in full. At times, the faculty was "paid" in produce. Heemstra did janitorial work and skimmed on his own salary. Just as the crisis of the Depression seemed to be easing, World War II came along and took most of the junior college men (and some of the faculty) into the armed services, again threatening the institution's existence.

But the institution continued and with the post-war enrollment increases, fortunes revived sufficiently, so that the 1949 General Synod was asked once again to approve upgrading the school, this time to be a four-year college. Although this had been a dream of the founders, the chief reasons for the request at this time was that the junior college was primarily involved in teacher training, and the state of Iowa was raising teacher educational requirements. Despite fierce opposition from Hope and Central, who understandably preferred Northwestern as a feeder rather than a competitor, with a 96-94 vote the Synod approved the proposal that Northwestern become a four-year college. Heemstra and, as one observer noted, the junior college choir made the difference; the latter's role had been that of good public relations for the school.

The better times of the post World War II years saw the erection in 1950 of a women's dormitory, named Heemstra Hall in honor of the president. But the many years of crisis has taken their toll on both Heemstra's health and the quality of education at Northwestern. Evidence of the latter was the junior college's failure to be accredited by the North Central Association in 1951, because of its orientation toward non-liberal arts areas like teacher training and business, as well as the faculty's relatively low academic qualifications. Heemstra suffered a major heart attack, which precipitated his retirement from the

in 1951; he became a full-
time instructor in the religion depart-
ment.

During his presidency, Heemstra
had a less religiously homoge-
neous faculty, containing non-Dutch
or even non-evangelical

Doubtless Heemstra, a devout
pastoral approach, had a
finding qualified RCA

especially for the junior
further he was already
to a more diverse faculty

experience at Central College.
The student body, however, remained
exclusively Dutch and Re-

formed in the area; this gradually
after Northwestern became a
college. Similarly, the board

remained composed of local
RCA dominions and
until about mid-century, after

gradually incorporated more
lay representatives (includ-
ing men) from the RCA as a whole,
lay members from nearby

Reformed or other evangeli-
cal churches.

Heemstra's successor was a polished,
professional from Chicago,
W. H. H. Wezeman (1892-1968).

A different sort of president,
but raised in the Chicago
mennonite background, earned bachelor's degrees in

law, and theology, a diploma
from Theological Seminary,
studied under Ralph

Whom the CRC deposed in
his biblical views, and a
law degree. He practiced law for

more teaching history and
at Grundy College, 1921-
which time he was ordained
in the CRC. From 1927
Wezeman was the
controversial for his

principal and Bible
Chicago Christian High
School, 1931-1937,
and then president of
Chicago College.

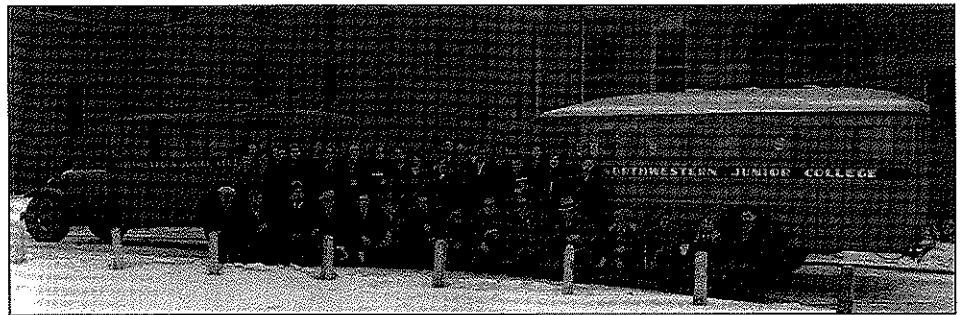


Photo: Archives, Northwestern College.

Wezeman's background prepared him to be president of Northwestern Junior College, which, like Chicago Christian, had a mixed Reformed and Christian Reformed student body. He dropped his CRC ministerial credentials and joined an RCA congregation in Orange City. Wezeman took very seriously the challenge to raise Northwestern's academic standards. Speaking to the board of trustees, he said, "The main business of a college is to produce trained minds. . . . It is often forgotten, however, that getting a trained mind is hard work. Many want learning to be painless. It must be made 'interesting.' In many colleges, as a noted educator recently observed, 'the whole apparatus of football, fraternities and fun is a means by which education is made palatable to those who have no business in it.'" One former faculty member recalls that Wezeman would visit classrooms to encourage better instruction. His efforts to improve Northwestern succeeded to a degree, with the junior college finally gaining accreditation in 1953 from the North Central Association.

Like Welmers, Wezeman was an exponent of the Kuyperian world and life view. In spite of Wezeman's tie to the CRC, Northwestern's proposal early in the 1950s to have the CRC join in running the junior college failed, just as the earlier 1911 plan had. Instead, the area CRC began Dordt College shortly afterward.

Wezeman had by then encountered stiff opposition from within Northwestern's administration and he left Orange City less than four years after he had come. Nevertheless, Wezeman prepared the way for the reforms of the next presidents, Stegenga and Granberg.

Preston Stegenga came in 1955 and finally guided the school to four-year collegiate status. The son of an RCA minister, Stegenga was Northwestern's first lay president. Much younger than his two predecessors, he came to Orange City at age thirty-one, with a fresh doctorate on the history of Hope College, his alma mater. Judging from this published dissertation, he endorsed the educational ideals of Hope's (then) two most recent presidents, who sought to steer between the extremes of both liberalism and conservatism. In any case, Stegenga continued Wezeman's efforts to upgrade the junior college. A third year was added in 1959, and a fourth year in 1960. Northwestern College's first four-year graduating class was that of 1961, the year the academy was terminated.

Stegenga's 1961 hiring of Dr. Gerald F. De Jong, a native of Orange City, as the first academic dean was a turning point in the effort to raise the quality of the faculty. The number of PhD's, almost none heretofore, began to accelerate slowly. In 1963, the faculty's size was about doubled and the Ramaker Library was completed. The students and faculty got a day off

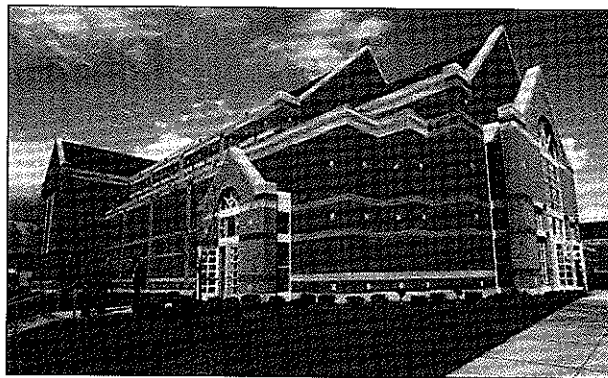
to form a book brigade to transfer the books to their new quarters. Other new buildings constructed under Stegenga's direction included a new gymnasium and men's and women's dormitories, to accommodate the fast-growing student body. He left Northwestern in 1966 for a position in international education.

Lars I. Granberg came that same year as president and led in making the liberal arts again central at Northwestern, as well as in emphasizing the integration of faith and learning. Although he was Norwegian born and a Wheaton College alumnus, he found his way into the Dutch Reformed circles of the RCA and Hope College. With a doctorate in psychology from the University of Chicago, Granberg took the unusual career route of teaching three separate times at Hope College, interspersed with positions at Fuller Theological Seminary and Northwestern College. His wide intellectual and cultural interests enabled him to build on the legacy of his predecessors and to attract a significant core of quality faculty who shared his vision for the integration of faith and learning.

Granberg appointed a Steering Committee for Long-Range Academic Planning that began its work by immersing itself in Calvin College's Kuyperian study-book on the nature of Christian liberal arts. This committee enunciated for Northwestern the ideal, to which it still subscribes, that the subject matter of every discipline is amenable, in one way or another, to being taught from a Christian perspective. This is what makes a college Christian, not the fact that it has Christian teachers, required chapel, required religion courses, and a chaplain, all of which Northwestern had and has. This view had been espoused before, by Welmers and Wezeman, but under Granberg it took root in the institution as a whole.

Another result of the Steering Committee's work was a high-powered, multi-discipline "Western Man" year-long course required of all freshmen—integrating faith and learning, and team taught by history, English, and philosophy faculty, coordinated by Bruce Murphy, who later became president. The number of faculty doctorates accelerated during this presidency, although it was and is hard to lure academically qualified Calvinists to the cornfields of Northwest Iowa.

Finally, in 1970 Northwestern achieved full accreditation by the North Central Association as a four-year liberal arts college. Teacher



Christ Chapel. Photo: Archives, Northwestern College.

training remained important for those who desired it, but it was no longer the main thrust of the school. In a sense, Northwestern had returned to its liberal arts roots, after a hiatus of about half a century. Although Granberg is remembered largely for his liberal arts emphasis, his presidency also witnessed the construction of a new women's dormitory and student dining room, Fern Smith Hall.

The late Virgil Rowenhorst was the last native Northwest Iowan to head Northwestern, 1975-1979. He had been president of the Northwestern State Bank in Orange City until he took over the reins at the college. Not a professional academic, he was chosen primarily to put the college on a

sounder financial footing and because he was a known quantity and "knew the territory." He also knew his limitations and left the academic side of the school to the professionals. He served Northwestern well, beginning the renovation of the building that became the Rowenhorst Student Center. His was a warm, healing, evangelical presence, cut short by cancer.

Northwestern's next president, Friedhelm Radandt, 1979-1985, solidified the institution's evangelical identity. He had come to the United States from Germany shortly after his marriage. An evangelical Baptist with a strong affinity for the Reformed

tradition, he was Northwestern's first president from outside Dutch Reformed circles. He had received theological training in Germany and earned a doctorate in German literature from the University of Chicago. Before coming to Northwestern as academic dean in 1977, he had held a similar position at Lake Forest College, Illinois.

Although Radandt incarnated the liberal arts, especially the humanities and high culture, it was during his presidency that the national tide in the area of "student development" proved irresistible, and Northwestern's student life budget began to rival the academic budget. He added the word "living" to "faith and learning," so that the slogan became "the integration of faith, living, and learning." Perhaps most important, Radandt, when dean, led Northwestern to join the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, founded in 1976. Each member institution requires personal faith in Christ of every full-time teacher and administrator. Northwestern, the only RCA college to belong, continues to

Origins

keep this commitment, along with colleges like Calvin, Dordt, and Wheaton. Under Radandt, therefore, the screening of prospective faculty (and administrators) became more focused than it had been since before Heemstra's time.

Another accomplishment, fulfillment of the long-held dream of a suitable place for worship by the entire Northwestern community, entered the final planning stages just before Radandt left for a new challenge at the King's College in New York. When completed, Christ Chapel replaced the multi-purpose auditorium in Van Peurse Hall.

James Bultman, like Granberg, came to Northwestern College from Hope College. After serving as president from 1985-1999, he returned to Hope as its president. Born and raised in the CRC, he chose to attend Hope College largely, as he himself has often said, so he could play football. He earned a doctorate in education and taught and coached part-time for some years at Hope before coming to Northwestern.

Bultman was a builder at Northwestern. He built faculty salaries, endowment, enrollments, a Christian atmosphere, and faculty-staff team spirit. Moreover he oversaw building construction. Christ Chapel/Performing

Arts Center and De Witt Music Hall structure, planned under Radandt, was completed. North Hall and the Bultman Center were erected. Zwemer Hall was restored, Van Peurse Hall's classrooms and offices were renovated, as was Fern Smith Dining Hall.

Bultman knew how to "win friends and influence people." One of his first accomplishments at Northwestern was to win the hearts of the faculty by raising their salaries ten percent a year for three consecutive years. He won the hearts of the students by regularly joining them for lunch in the dining hall. And with his down-to-earth manner, he won the hearts and pocketbooks of the constituency, some of them wealthy; this in spite of the fact that he modestly disclaimed any fund-raising talent when he arrived at Northwestern. Accompanying all of this was Bultman's stress on maintaining and strengthening the Christian character of the institution.

Northwestern's newest president is the personable teacher-pastor-administrator Bruce Murphy, formerly provost of Seattle Pacific University, who arrived on campus in January 2001, although he had taught at Northwestern in the 1970s. He shares a Wheaton College background with Granberg, ministerial ordination (as a Presbyterian) with Heemstra, a history

doctorate with Stegenga, and Baptist origins with Radandt. Like Granberg, Radandt, and Bultman, he is dedicated to the integration of faith and learning.

To summarize, the story of Northwestern is the story of recovering its original liberal arts orientation and a clear Christian focus after a period when these were overshadowed in the struggles to survive and to grow from an academy to a college. In the process, it has borrowed a bit of Kuyper, become less Reformed and more evangelical in its outlook. ❀

A note on sources:

This article is the result of many years of immersion in the history of Northwestern, as well as teaching there from 1963 to 1998. The following are the principal sources consulted: Gerald F. De Jong, *From Strength to Strength: A History of Northwestern 1882-1982* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982); Russell L. Gasero, ed., *Historical Directory of the Reformed Church in America 1628-1992* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992); reports of the principals to the General Synods of the RCA; selected Board of Trustees minutes; selected Northwestern student newspapers. I acknowledge the assistance of many, including Cornelia B. Kennedy, Elton Bruins, Robert Swierenga, George De Vries, Everett Welmers, Frederick Wezeman, Theodore Van Bruggen, Richard Harms, and Judy Hilbelink (for photographs).

Central College, 1853-2001: A Brief Historical Sketch

James E. McMillan

Among those colleges associated with the Reformed Church (RCA) in the Midwestern United States, Central College in Pella, Iowa, stands unique. Not only is it the oldest such existing institution, having been founded in 1853, but when originally established, it was not by the Reformed, but by the Baptist Church.



Rev. Hendrik Pieter Scholte was the moving force behind the founding of Central College. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

Central can be regarded as an adopted child of the RCA. Yet the Pella Hollanders of the Reformed tradition made highly significant contributions to the college during its early Baptist era, which lasted until 1916. This is particularly true concerning Dominie Hendrik Pieter Scholte, Pella's iconoclastic founder, who can also justifiably be considered the foremost founder of Central, for he, more than any other, stood responsible for bringing the college to the

town. After his 1847 emigration to America, Scholte's vision for the future incorporated a high degree of Americanization, for the dominie "had already become an American at heart." He himself stated, "I should, however, not complain if we could have a little more well educated society." Central College would fit constructively into these plans.¹

As Pella grew during the 1850s, Iowa Baptists engaged in a statewide search for an appropriate location for a Baptist-sponsored "university." In the ensuing competition, the meeting to determine the site was in Pella in June 1853 where the imperious dominie held sway. With his six-foot, three-inch stature, the pipe smoking Scholte rather easily cajoled the voting Baptists to choose Pella over nearby rival Oskaloosa, particularly since he personally donated the land for the future campus and money for the initial building. He became the first president of the board of trustees of what was entitled the Central University of Iowa upon its June 3, 1853 founding. Central librarian/historian Josephine Thostensen wrote upon the college centennial:

That the Central University of Iowa found a home among the Dutch settlers was largely due to the influence of the Reverend Hendrik Pieter Scholte, who showed in this way how little significance he attached to differences of opinion regarding the formalities of religious worship He fully cooperated with the Baptists, gave generously of his wealth, and at all times had the interest of the College at heart.²

James E. McMillan received a PhD from Arizona State University and has taught at Denison University and at Central College. An accomplished author, he is currently working on a biography of Ernest McFarland.

Origins

With Emmanuel H. Scarff as its first principal, Central began classes as an academy in October 1854 in temporary quarters while the original building, "Old Central," was under construction. By fall 1856, classes moved to the present campus, and the next year Elihu Gunn became Central's first president in anticipation of the opening of the collegiate department in 1858. Gunn oversaw the usual problems of enrollment and finance for a young college. He contributed generously of his own money as the school navigated the financial Panic of 1857 and saw enrollment top 300 when he resigned to return to the pastorate in 1861. At this time the students were drawn evenly from among the original Dutch and the growing American residents in Pella, and in 1861, the first collegiate class graduated with six students.

Principal Scarff became acting president upon Gunn's departure and served in that capacity for a decade. No one loomed larger in Central's first twenty-five years than this man who served as principal, professor, pastor, and now president. Scarff faced the challenges of the Civil War during which Central distinguished itself. Enrollment plunged as 120 of 122 men students enlisted. Of these twenty-four gave their lives, an extraordinary sacrifice of over 20 percent.

After the dangerous uncertainty of the war years, finance and enrollment stabilized by the time the Lewis A. Dunn presidency began in 1871. Financial problems were continuous, since endowments consistently proved elusive and vexatious. In his decade of service, Dunn demonstrated skillful leadership as the school withstood another depression and continued to improve the quality of its education. He resigned due to age in 1881.

The decade of the 1880s saw Central face its most serious challenge to the survival of the institution,

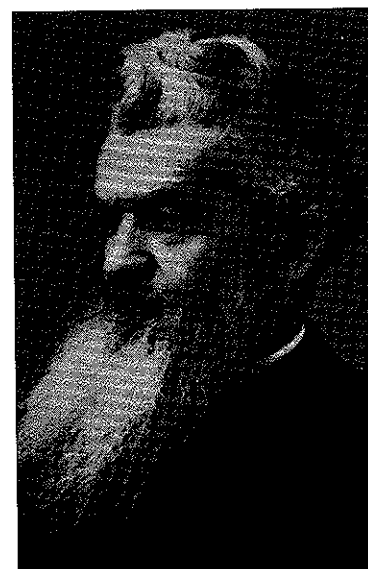
resulting from competition from Des Moines College, which was also Baptist. This competition was not resolved until the 1916 transfer of Central to the auspices of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Des Moines College had been established in the new state capital in 1865 and by 1870 a movement to unify the Baptist colleges had emerged. By 1886 this movement had reached full momentum with a special committee selected to make a final decision. The vote supported the selection of Des Moines, with Central to continue, but as a feeder academy. Influential friends of Central strongly resisted and obtained a court injunction restraining the trustees from transferring any property to Des Moines or closing the Central doors. The injunction stood and the college remained open. As an alumnus poetically described:

Our hearts are wedded to the quiet little village where the college is the town and the town is the college. . . . It's so dear to its friends . . . it is best not to disturb the tenor of its way. . . . Central is not a transferable identity, it is tenacious of life and has friends who will die to keep warm the vital spark that certainly was lighted by no human means . . .³

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Central began its first building expansion. Cotton Hall, a dormitory for women, opened in 1891, and construction began in 1893 on the auditorium to house the library, gymnasium, and chapel. Delayed by the depression that began in 1893 and lasted until 1899, the auditorium was completed in 1901. The Jordan Hall of Science was added to the campus in 1905.

The turn of the century college offered various academic options including classical and scientific programs as well as a two-year normal school for teacher training. Music, art, and literary societies flourished as

well. A Biblical Department, training students for the ministry, had been started after the trustees had recalled Lewis Dunn to the presidency in the fall of 1886. Dunn died at his desk on Thanksgiving Day in 1888, fulfilling a career as one of Central's most exemplary leaders.



Elihu Gunn was the first president of Central and saw it through the tumultuous years following the panic of 1857. Photo: Archives, Central College.

Enrollment wavered during these years from around 175 to slightly over 300, most of them Baptist. The large Dutch population in Pella proved less a factor in the student body during the five decades beginning during the 1870s. As Jacob Van Der Zee wrote:

In the struggle for existence and wealth in Iowa very many Hollanders have lost sight of cultural pursuits. Some have weaned their children from school at an early age while others have been easily satisfied to see their children finish the grammar school or at best the high school.

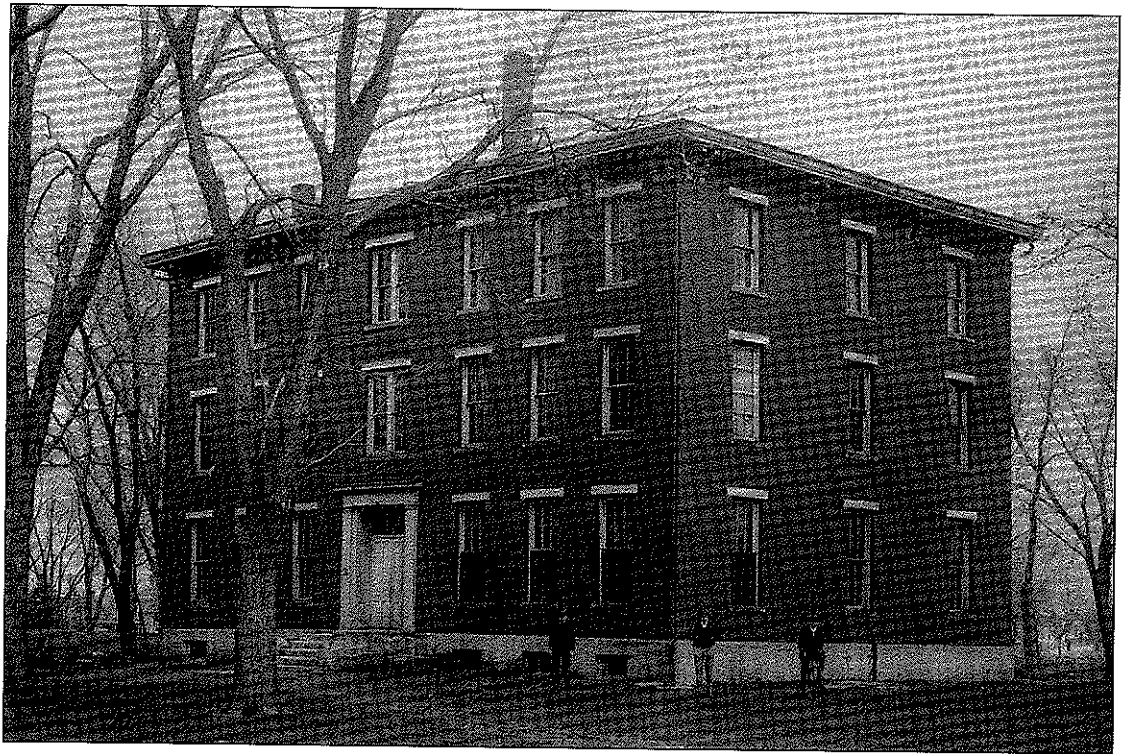
Jacob Van Hinte concurred: ". . . the majority of Pellians was even more indifferent to such training. . . . Many Pellians looked down with some contempt both on those who taught as

well as on those who learned.”⁴ Disinterest in higher education was not the only excuse for the lack of Dutch enrollment. Those who did aspire, matriculated at the RCA’s Hope College founded in 1866 in Holland, Michigan. Others began by attending the Northwestern Academy, also affiliated with the RCA. Founded in Orange City, Iowa, in 1882, it directed its graduates to Hope to complete their studies and not Central.

The final conflict with Des Moines College occurred between 1907 and 1916. At first Central seemed at an advantage, and in 1907 a Baptist majority vote favored unification of instruction at Central. But the 222-146 tally fell 24 short of the required two-thirds. The question went unresolved and soon the momentum shifted once again to Des Moines. By 1915, the RCA entered the picture, desirous of retaining a collegiate institution in Pella. In a series of meetings between RCA officials, Baptist representatives, and Central administrators, the RCA, on June 20, 1916, accepted the trustees’ offer to turn the college over to the RCA.

Thus it was that after sixty-three years of existence under the auspices of the Baptists of Iowa, Central College came under the control of the Reformed Church in America, the oldest Protestant denomination with a continuous history in the United States. This was a gracious gift to the Reformed Church and one gratefully received by its General Synod.⁵

There were significant, almost immediate, difficulties to overcome with the new affiliation. The entire



Old Central was built during the middle 1850s. Photo: Archives, Central College.

endowment had gone to Des Moines with the Baptists. Enrollment dropped dramatically to only 50 as 106 students enlisted in World War I. Moreover, a series of tragedies struck campus structures. In February 1917, the auditorium burned, and while the library holdings were saved, the building was a total loss. Soon after, in June 1922, venerable “Old Central” fell victim to fire as well. Then, in 1923, Cotton Hall was ravaged so severely by fire that it had to be condemned. The endowment gone, enrollment down, and three buildings lost were an unimaginable series of setbacks.

The alacrity of response to these losses from church and community attested to the new and inspired commitment that emerged following the 1916 transfer. The RCA denomination contributed \$150,000 towards a projected \$200,000 endowment. During the war, enrollment declines were assuaged somewhat by opening campus facilities to the Student Army

Training. After the auditorium fire, the community and church funded the quick construction of the new Ludwig Library which opened in the spring of 1918. Then, in the fall of 1918, Graham Hall dormitory for women opened to be followed in the fall of 1921 by a modern gymnasium funded almost entirely by the Pella Chamber of Commerce. The endowment, too, stabilized in the 1920s.

After the affiliation with the RCA, the new trustees chose Hope College Latin professor M.J. Hoffman as president. After seeing the college through the frenetic activity described above, he resigned in 1925 to accept a position at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey. His replacement: John Wesselink of Pella’s First Reformed Church, the last of the Doctors of Divinity to move from pulpit to president. His immediate goal was replacing “Old Central,” and the first floor of today’s Central Hall opened in 1928, the second following in 1929 before the Depression halted

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construction. The Depression proved difficult on many fronts, particularly because enrollment fell to 160. But the church and community contributed as best they were able to the financial shortfalls. President Wesselink commented on the severity of these years, "The need of education has not ceased on account of the financial collapse. As long as there are young people in our country we may expect that there will be those who need and those who support Central College as a means of training these"⁶

After nine years at the helm, Wesselink resigned in 1934 and was replaced by Carroll College professor Irwin J. Lubbers, who introduced several innovations to deal with the Great Depression. That he proved a most successful leader is certified by the completion of Central Hall's third floor in 1935 and the dedication of the new Douwstra Chapel in 1940. Students and faculty alike contributed to collegiate survival, the latter accepting a 50 percent salary cut and often receiving produce and services from

students in lieu of cash payment. The students participated in an "earn your way" program making cabinets and furniture and assembling everything from hog feeders to ironing boards. Perhaps their most unique contribution was the importation and sale of tulip bulbs throughout the Pella area. As the Depression came to a close, enrollment peaked at 371, an estimated one-half from Dutch and Reformed background. Central had yet again weathered a major storm.

The World War II years witnessed generous cooperation and contribution to the war effort from Central. While students and staff engaged in scrap and bond drives, the college hosted the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps for officer training. Then the Navy Air Cadets moved in with full force, taking over Graham Hall for the war's duration. Ultimately, over 600 students served during the war, 21 of whom gave their lives.

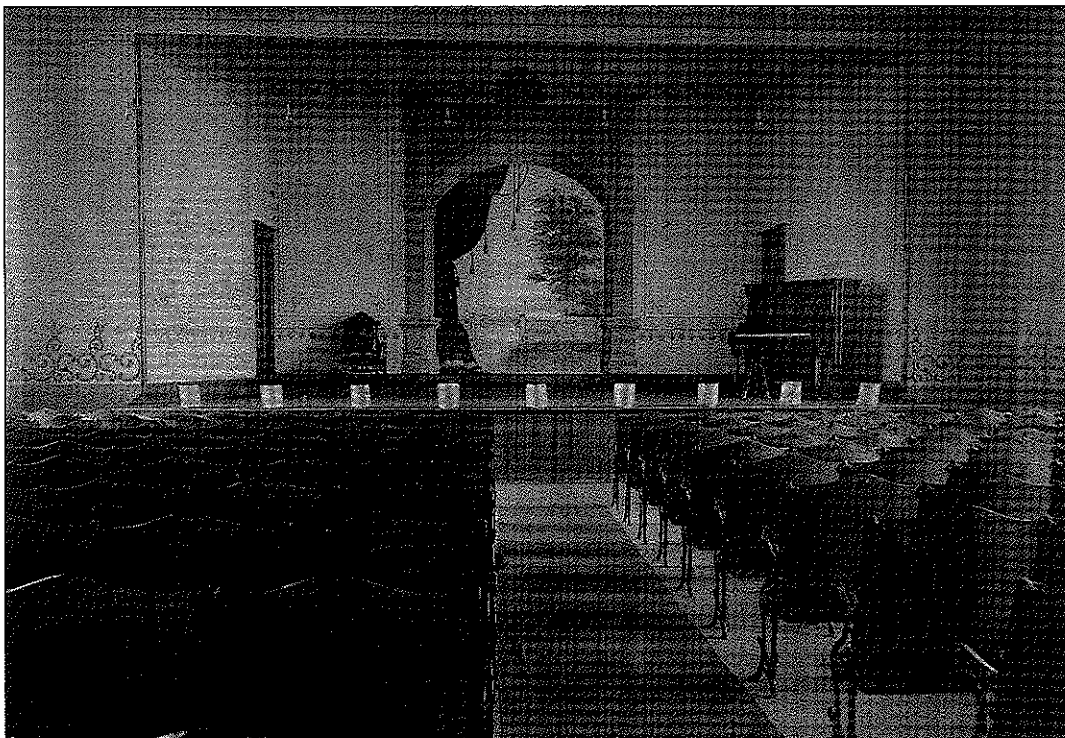
On an academic level, the most significant event during this period was the college's 1942 accreditation as

a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The lack of accreditation did not result from scholarship questions, rather from the school's financial situation. With the loss of the original endowment to Des Moines College (which closed in 1930), Central struggled determinedly for twenty-six years to garner the requisite \$500,000 for accreditation.

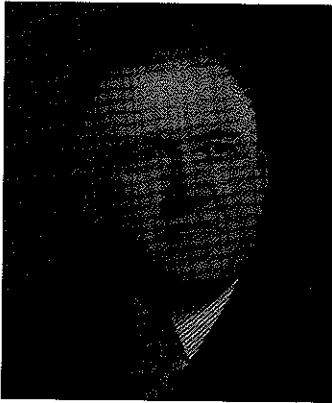
As the war years drew to a close, Irwin Lubbers resigned to accept the presidency of Central's sister school, Hope College, having completed a successful eleven years during most challenging times. Gerrit T. Vander Lugt left the presidency of Carroll College to replace Lubbers in January 1946, and with the influence of the GI Bill, enrollment reached an all-time high of 518. To accommodate the influx, a small men's dormitory was constructed (today's media center), a north wing was added to Graham Hall, and a trailer town was established for married students. Kuyper Stadium went up in 1949, and by 1951, the college's largest dormitory, Gaass Hall, opened for 160 men.

President Vander Lugt had the distinguished honor of presiding over the Central College centennial in 1953, during which the institution re-affirmed its commitment and mission. Thostensen writes of the occasion:

Central College . . . is a church college . . . but is not sectarian in a narrow sense. . . . By charter she is to offer "equal advantages to all students . . . irrespective of denomination or religious profession. . . . she believes and teaches that all truth rests ultimately upon the nature of God; that the best learning is that which recognizes Him in His personal relations with men; that the highest culture reaches



Douwstra Auditorium was built during the 1890s. Photo: Archives, Central College.



Under the capable direction of Irwin J. Lubbers, Central weathered the last years of the Great Depression and the WWII years. Photo: Archives, Central College.

the heart as well as the mind; and that the noblest life is the life lived in Jesus Christ.⁷

Appropriately during the celebration, Vander Lugt and former presidents Hoffman and Lubbers spoke in Douwstra Chapel from Scholte's pulpit, donated to Pella by his former church in the Netherlands.

The remainder of Vander Lugt's presidency saw enrollment and faculty numbers remain stable while campus development proceeded at a rapid pace. To provide students with more recreation facilities, the Memorial Student Union opened in 1954. In 1957, an addition doubled the size of Ludwig Library, and in 1958, a new south wing and a dining hall, seating 500, were added to Graham Hall. Until 1960, when he resigned to accept a position at New Brunswick, Vander Lugt's tenure saw the greatest construction effort in college history.

Arend D. Lubbers, the son of the former president, replaced Vander Lugt in what was initially regarded as a risky move. However the young, twenty-nine-year-old Lubbers, at the time the nation's youngest college president, quickly revealed his instinct for continued development as he literally took "a conservative and

somewhat parochial institution and shook it into the 20th century."⁸ New buildings included Pietenpol Residence Hall (1962), Cox-Snow Music Building (1964), and Huffman Residence Hall (1965). Construction commenced on both the new Kuyper Gymnasium and Stadium and Scholte Hall, Central's largest residence for 325 women, and a large pond was added to the campus landscape. Central's foreign programs also began to develop between 1964 and 1968, first with the Sorbonne in Paris with others following in Vienna, Austria, Granada, Spain, and the Yucatan in Mexico.

The most significant developments during the Lubbers nine years was that the student body tripled from 430 to 1,355; administration grew from 16 to



In 1960 Arend D. Lubbers, son of Irwin J. Lubbers, became president. Photo: Archives, Central College.

42, and the faculty expanded from 43 to 107. In sum, Lubbers brought about the most dramatic and lasting changes in Central history and essentially turned it into the college that exists today.

After Lubbers accepted the presidency of Grand Valley State College in Allendale, Michigan, Kenneth Weller

came from the Hope College economics and business program to assume the presidency in 1970. In a time of national unrest, Weller's first tasks required dealing with the campus division and turmoil representative of the era. Already, Martin Luther King had paid an exciting yet controversial visit to campus where his March 1967 speech in "Old Gym" previewed his opposition to the Vietnam War.⁹ While many students served in Vietnam, others marched around campus and Pella Square in protest.

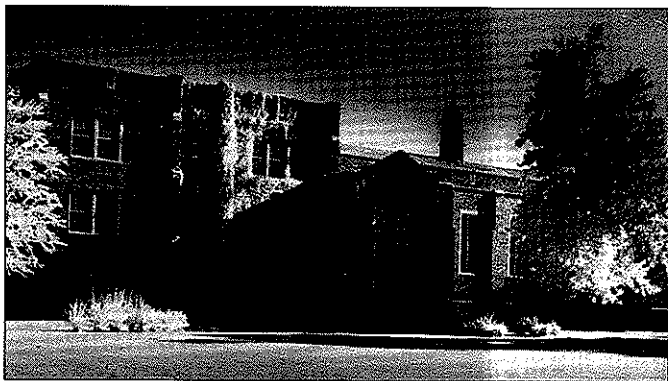
With time, the issues were resolved; students returned to more academic pursuits, teams, clubs, fraternities, and sororities. Lasting until 1990, Weller's tenure marked Central's longest in that office. While enrollment remained steady, college facilities expanded greatly to accommodate the changing needs of students. By 1972, an imaginative townhouse concept was opened to upper-class students in the Collegiate Center named after the RCA's Collegiate Church in New York City, the oldest existing Protestant church in the United States. Today fifteen such houses serve over 300 students. In 1974, the Geisler Learning Resource Center opened, housing a library of 200,000 volumes and a media center, while the old Ludwig Library was converted into the Arts and Behavioral Science Building. Other major building construction during the Weller years included the Vermeer Science Center funded by Pella's Vermeer Manufacturing and the Kruidenier Center for Communications and Theater. Pella Corporation's Kuyper Family continued its generosity, funding the Kuyper Chapel in 1981 and the Kuyper Fieldhouse in 1989. The last of the construction during the Weller years was the new Maytag Center which replaced the old Student Union in the 1990s.

Central's foreign programs also grew both in reputation and affiliation as

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new sites evolved at the University of London, the University of Leiden, and Trinity College. Approximately half of Central's students avail themselves of these foreign opportunities, and large contingents also are drawn from regional colleges and universities.

Any history of Central would be incomplete without mention of its strong athletic tradition. By the late



The current Central Hall. Photo: Archives, Central College.

nineteenth century, competing football, basketball, baseball, and track teams had been organized. These have since been augmented by cross country, soccer, wrestling, tennis, and golf. By the 1930s, Central's reputation as a highly desired and competitive opponent throughout Iowa had been established by such athletic directors/coaches as "Babe" Tysseling and Ron Schipper, who brought Central its first NCAA Division III national championship in football in 1974. Together they served from 1930-97. Perhaps Central's most significant athletic achievement has been its attention to the development of women's athletics. The "Dutch" women have amassed an incredible nine national championships in track, cross country, basketball, three in softball, and the last three consecutive years in volleyball.

William Wiebenga, who replaced Weller as president in 1990, oversaw much of this athletic success, but success in other areas proved elusive. Central faced a crisis of identity toward

the mid-1990s as enrollment declined to as low as 1,100, and its endowment did not grow at the pace of other competing Iowa colleges. While the school's academic reputation remained intact, grumblings emanated from students, faculty, and administrators about the college's direction. Faced with slowed momentum and an uncertain future, Wiebenga resigned in January 1997, but not before Central Market debuted a new concept dining hall arrangement with a wide variety of food stations and selections.

A nationwide search for a successor led to the decision in January 1998 to offer the presidency to Dr. David Roe, a former Air Force brigadier general, business leader, and educator. Under Roe's direction, enrollment once again approaches 1,500, and the endowment is nearing \$50 million. The old Graham Dining Hall has been

refurbished into an attractive conference center and two new major buildings have been erected, and the

Weller Center for Business and International Studies and the Schipper Fitness Center both opened in 1999.

Assuredly Central College has come a long way from its inception shortly after the major Dutch emigration to the Midwest in 1847. Enrollment has grown from Principal Scarff's original thirty-seven to 1,500, more than 12,000 graduates have received diplomas, major endowment gains have accumulated, and over thirty new structures now adorn the campus. Central students have participated in four major wars, the institution has weathered four depressions, and the college remains the only survivor among the original competing Baptist institutions. The generosity and vision of the Reformed Church and the citizens of Pella have ensured this continuum. In considering this future, one must return briefly to the vision of Scholte, who first brought the forces of education and religion together—scholarship and spirituality—secular and ecumenical. The college today stands witness to nearly 150 years of dedicated effort. ♣



Central College today. Photo: Archives, Central College.

refurbished into an attractive conference center and two new major buildings have been erected, and the

Endnotes

1. Phillip Webber, "Reassessing the Visionary Thinking of H.P. Scholte," *The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Dutch Heritage* (Holland, MI: The Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies, 1998). Scholte's quote is from his own biographical sketch found in Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989): 193. See also James E. McMillan, "Henry Peter Scholte and the 1853 Founding of Central College," in *The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration*.
2. Josephine Thostensen, "One Hundred Years of Service, 1853-1953: A History of Central College," 9-10. This is a special edition of the *Central College Bulletin*, August 1953, published for the college centennial. This 50-page article is

the most complete history of the college to that time.

3. Anna Howell Clarkson, *A Beautiful Life and Its Associations* (New York: Dept. of Iowa History, 1899), 103. An 1867 graduate, Clarkson compiled this book-length reminiscence of Central College at the request of the Alumni Association. See also, James E. McMillan, "Survival of the Fittest: The Tale of Three Iowa Colleges, Burlington, Central, and Des Moines, 1852-1929," unpublished manuscript held in the college archives. Baptist Burlington Institute faced continual struggle from its 1851 founding until its demise in 1901.
4. Jacob Van Der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Des Moines: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912) 272. Jacob Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Books, 1985) 398.

5. Thostensen, 27-28.

6. Thostensen, 36; *The Central College Ray*, May 27, 1932.

7. Thostensen, 45.

8. William Wing, "Central College, 1953-1986," in *The History of Pella, Iowa, 1847-1987* (Pella, IA: Pella Historical Society, 1987) 129-140. This article updated Thostensen's work. This specific pagination (25) comes from Wing's manuscript of his Central history held in the Central College Archives.

9. Brad Ver Ploeg, "A King in the Heartland: Martin Luther King's Visit to Central College, March 1967," an unpublished seminar paper prepared in 1997 and held in the college archives. Three weeks after his Central speech, King officially came out against the Vietnam War in a speech at his own Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

Grundy College: Undying Legacy or Broken Promises?

Alan Waddilove

Grundy College, formerly of Grundy Center, Iowa, was the first attempt by members of the Christian Reformed Church to found an institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi River. The history of the school is one continuous struggle for survival. At various times Grundy



Rev. William Bode served as president of Grundy College for fourteen years, most of the institution's history. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

College consisted of a Christian high school, two years of accredited undergraduate college-level instruction with an unaccredited third year, and a theological school. In spite of committed support from then Classis Ostfriesland, along with the hard work of the college staff, and near heroic efforts by its president, William Bode, to raise funds, the school was not able to avoid financial ruin.

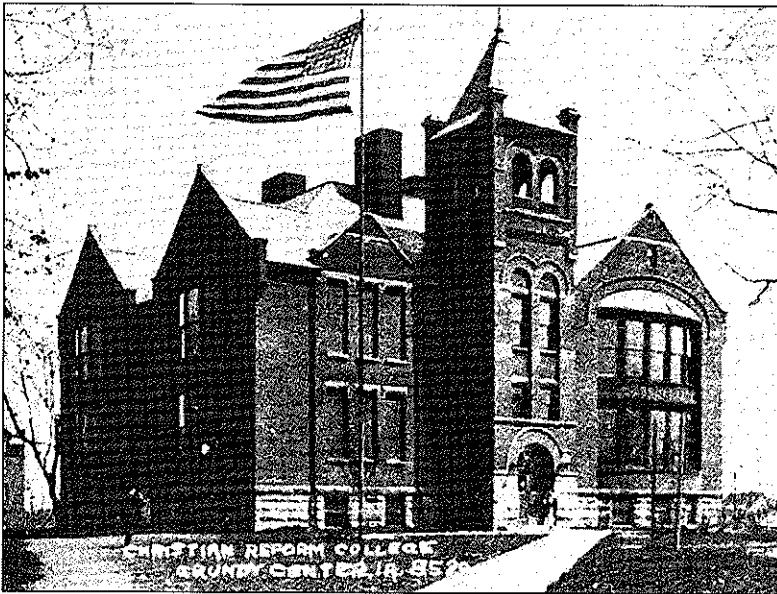
Recently, two views were expressed of the Grundy experience in the February 4, 1991, issue of *The Banner*. Rev. Douglas Bratt, pastor of Lincoln

Center Christian Reformed Church near Grundy Center, Iowa, notes, "If a book were being written on this subject, it would have to be called *Broken Promises*."¹ Valerie Van Kooten, the author of the article, suggests a different title, "perhaps something like *Undying Legacy*."² Her suggestion came in response to an eyewitness account by Etta Kallemyn Vermeer, who seemed not to believe the school had ever broken any promises. A closer examination of the Grundy College experience demonstrates that neither "Broken Promises" nor "Undying Legacy" encompasses the full story of the school.

The impetus for the formation of Grundy College came from the Christian Reformed Church's (CRC) Classis Ostfriesland, formed originally in 1896 as Classis Ackley, and renamed Ostfriesland in 1898.³ Classis Ostfriesland was an unusual classis in the CRC in that the organizing criterion was not a geographic region but the East Friesian ethnicity of its member churches. Many of the parishioners of these churches hailed from East Friesland, formerly a functionally independent province of the Holy Roman Empire, at times under the control of or federated with the United Netherlands, but more often independent or under the control of one of the German kingdoms. It is currently part of the German Province of *Niedersachsen*. As a result, the language of these people was German.

Reformed congregations had a significant presence in East Friesland since the time of John Calvin, and these congregations had close contact

Alan Waddilove is a recent graduate of Calvin College with a major in history and presented an earlier version of his examination of Grundy College as his senior seminar project.



The main building of the college, intended to serve the German-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

with their Dutch counterparts, opening their pulpits to each other's ministers and readily accepting membership transfers from each other. After organizing, several Reformed East Friesian immigrant congregations in the United States decided to join the CRC. This presented an immediate problem to the Dutch-speaking denomination. The East Friesians, while generally bilingual to a degree, preferred German to Dutch. This language disparity led to several problems, not the least of which was that CRC pastors called to churches in Classis Ostfriesland were ill-equipped to communicate with their German-speaking East Friesian congregations. The ministers were proficient speakers of Dutch and English, but could only read German.

Resolving this language problem was the most immediate need for Grundy College and, at first, the driving reason for its creation. Grundy College was to provide prospective CRC pastors with theological training in the German, and train them to become German speakers. East Friesian immigrants had made repeated requests at Synod toward this end, as

The rules adopted by the faculty for the seminary and for Bible classes meeting in the high school academy portions of the school during the inaugural academic year of 1916-17 included: "Every third sermon declaimed by a student is to be in the English language; the rest are to be in the German language, or if a student cannot use that language, in the Dutch. The special Bible class is to be divided; all the German members going into a German section, and all those of the rest that prefer the instruction in English going into an English section. Dr. Bode will take charge of the latter."⁵ Although it was aware of its mission, the institution tempered that with what was possible.⁶

Geographically Grundy Center, Iowa, the location of Grundy College, is thirty miles west of Waterloo. The rural community is located near the center of the state, a geographical position that later became a point of fierce contention among the school's supporters and its detractors.

Classes convened in the fall of 1916 with a flurry of activity, and high hopes. The intention was for the campus to contain a seminary,

early as 1883, well before the organization of Classis Ostfriesland in 1896-1898.⁴

Although the aim to produce German-speaking preachers was paramount, instruction was multi-lingual from the start.

Christian high school, and a two-year Christian junior college, which hopefully would be expanded to a four-year institution. Local financial and moral support poured in, and no hard feelings yet existed between the fledgling college and other Christian Reformed educational institutions. The first of many local newspaper articles dealing with the college appeared on the front page of *The Grundy Center Democrat* on March 30, 1916, stating, "Grundy Center to get denominational school—purpose of college is to prepare young men for ministry."⁷ The article concluded with this call for the resident to unite behind the efforts and eliminate any difficulties that prevent the school's completion.⁸ The faculty, consisting of President William Bode, seminary professors John Timmerman and Diedrich Kromminga, and instructors Hoefker, Robberts, King, and Schulta were announced later in the summer.⁹

It seemed the entire community turned out to help make the educational plans a reality. Enrollment in the inaugural class was thirty students. Optimism abounded as is clear from the *Democrat* on the opening day of classes:

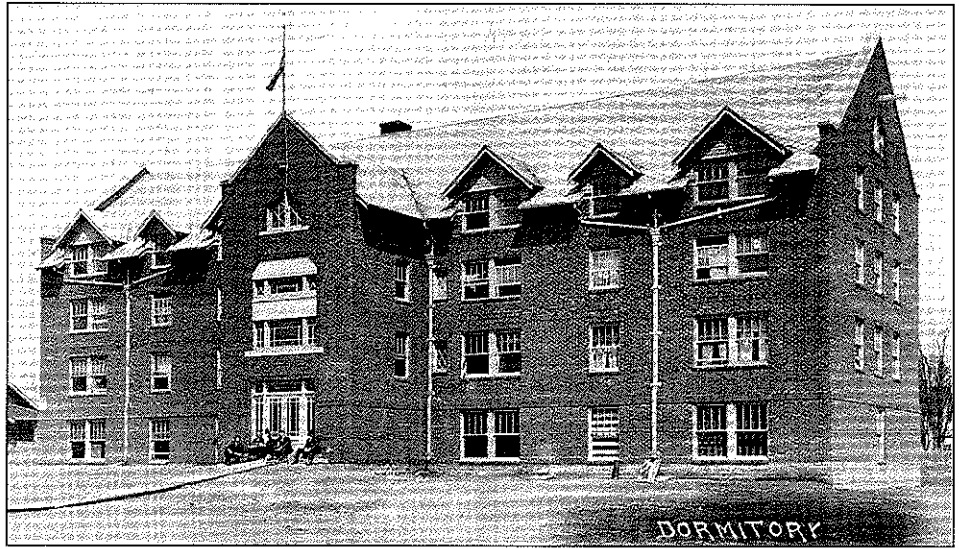
The Christian Reform (sic) College at Grand Rapids opened with four students; now there are 400. The German Presbyterian College at Dubuque opened with fewer students than we have in our new college here and the Dubuque college within a few years has gained an enrollment of over four hundred . . . Growth is bound to come if the public support remains as loyal and as enthusiastis (sic) as it is now and it will remain that way for we feel that this is our college and will hold ourselves responsible for its future.¹⁰

Support from the 1916 CRC Synod for the opening of the college was somewhat less enthusiastic, but permission was given to proceed with a Christian Reformed high school,

junior college and seminary along the lines envisioned by Classis Ostfriesland. Synod agreed to provide a \$2,000 yearly stipend for maintenance beginning in October 1917. But Synod did not grant another request from Classis Ostfriesland to be relieved of paying its annual quota for the support of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. This in spite of the fact that that classis would be making significant contributions to Grundy College.¹¹

Although the immediate financial future of the college seemed secure, frugality was the order of the day. President Bode wrote the following plea for the educational essentials, "Now what we ought to have is a chair in the office for every professor. Is there not a society or friend that can furnish us the money for these? We ought to have some five or six more."¹² Bode also noted that in less than one-half year the number of students at the college had grown from thirty to seventy-six. This raised another problem—space. Bode wrote again two weeks later, "We are in great need of a dormitory. Our little 'city' does not afford the accommodations a large city affords." He later also spoke to the financial status of his students: "Nearly all of our present student body are those who could not or would not go to Calvin. Another said yet to me today, 'Dr. Bode, your college is a God-sent blessing to our children.'"¹³ The result from these articles was that for the first, and perhaps the only time, Grundy College successfully resolved a serious obstacle and the cornerstone of a new dormitory was laid August 11, 1917 "with appropriate ceremonies."¹⁴

The United States' entrance into World War I and the resulting anti-German sentiment proved to be a two-fold blow for the new college. First, the school's mission to train German-speaking ministers was made invalid



The men's dormitory whose construction began in 1917, as the nation was on the verge of entering WWI. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

almost overnight. Training seminary students to preach in German-only services became illegal as the speaking of the German was banned in Iowa by the state legislature. The second blow was delivered by the 1918 CRC Synod. Following the request for financial support in 1916, a synodical committee was appointed to study the role of Grundy and report to the next synod in 1918. This committee reported that there was a misunderstanding as to the school's purpose. Classis Oostfriesland had always intended it to be a full program leading to the preparing of candidates for the ministry. The denomination initially assumed it was only to be a program to prepare students for studying at the seminary in Grand Rapids. When the classical intention became more widely known, considerable opposition arose within the denomination to establishing a second seminary, which would divide the already limited funds available for theological training. The decision was to deny denominational funding for the theological program at Grundy.¹⁵ Synod also resolved that although it could not order the college section of the curriculum to cease, it would not

support its continued existence. Synod did order the seminary section of the college to be closed in 1920.

Grundy continued to find both critics and supporters in the denomination. One of the stronger critics was Dr. John Van Lonkhuyzen, pastor of Alpine Avenue CRC.¹⁶ Henry Beets, the editor of *The Banner*, was always a strong supporter of Grundy College. Earlier, Beets had been among the most vocal advocates of the movement for a Christian Reformed college west of the Mississippi River. In fact, he believed Grundy Center to be the ideal location for such an institution.

The failure of the plans to erect a Western Calvin Academy at Hull, Iowa, was due, in part, we understand, to the fact that the Northwestern Academy at Orange City was declared to be so accessible that our people felt no need of a rival school in the same county. That argument is nullified if we get a school in Grundy County.

WE OUGHT TO GET IT! And NOW seems to be the providential time! Brethren of East Friesland, strike on the anvil, unitedly and continually, while the iron is hot!¹⁷

Beets felt that a Christian Reformed college was absolutely necessary west

of the Mississippi. Secondly, such colleges would increase both the number of churches and the number of members in those other denominations throughout the West. Thirdly, such institutions would help spread the college-educated members of the CRC—the great majority of whom lived in Michigan, near Calvin College, at the time. Finally, Beets thought that since Michigan families benefited so much more from Calvin College than members from farther afield, they should be assessed at a higher rate for its maintenance. This would free up funds from elsewhere to go toward supporting Grundy College.¹⁸

Grundy did survive as a sort of a western Calvin during the decade of the 1920s. However, financial difficulties became an increasing problem for the Iowa college. The seminary closed in 1920, having graduated six men.¹⁹

With this closure, Grundy became a less controversial topic in the denomination and the matter of continuing the college was brought up at the Synod of 1920. This led to the so-called “Compromise,” a personal agreement between Grundy President Bode and Calvin’s first president, John J. Hiemenga. The compromise allowed some denominational funding for Grundy, as well as the continuance of a sort of junior seminary. A prospective Christian Reformed seminarian would be allowed to take the first two years of his theological training at Grundy before transferring to Calvin, where the education would be completed and a degree conferred.²⁰ However, just after Bode and

Hiemenga reached this agreement, the Calvin Board of Trustees abrogated this. This angered Bode, who vented his views in Grundy’s monthly newsletter, and in so doing may have contributed to the board’s 1921 decision to reject the compromise.²¹

It was the last attempt by Grundy to obtain denominational funding. The school entered the 1920s as a very small operation struggling with a curriculum that consisted of a high school and a two-year junior college, a far cry from the 1916 plans envisioned

success, but he continued until at least 1926. Bode also contacted several large public Midwestern universities to recognize a third year at Grundy, and their collective response was that they would follow the lead of the University of Iowa in Iowa City. That institution referred the matter to the Iowa State Authorities. It appears that the college board even flirted with trying to climb the mountain of paperwork necessary to reinstate four years of study one year later. The college board officially authorized a third year,



Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

by Classis Ostfriesland. The college’s largest enrollment came in 1923, with 110 students.²² The largest combined graduating class, both the high school and junior college, came two years later when thirty-five degrees were conferred.²³

President Bode persistently sought to get Grundy’s accreditation from the State of Iowa. His efforts met with no

without any official word from the State. The board attempt at a *fait accompli* bore no fruit, since the State officially declined to recognize the work of any third-year students from Grundy the next summer. The matter of a third year was not raised again.²⁴

Although the 1920s was a financially profitable decade for most of the nation, it was not for Grundy’s



The faculty and students in 1918. President Bode is seated at the far right of the front row. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

supporters, who endured a prolonged depression in farm prices. In spite of the fact that this constituency was distributed over a large geographic area in several states, it was overwhelmingly rural and agricultural in makeup. After the end of the war, agricultural prices plummeted as production levels in North America remained at near wartime levels, while other parts of the world, most specifically Western Europe, came back under the plow after the temporary disruption caused by the War.²⁵ The result was a worldwide collapse in the price of nearly all kinds of agricultural commodities. Even more foreboding for the future of Grundy College, the more famous Great Depression of the 1930s was on the horizon. Consequently the college was forced constantly to deal with the fact that its financial supporters were able to provide less and less with each year.

Despite a grim financial situation, Bode was not a man to give up easily. Always looking to further the institution, he successfully attached a state certified commercial education program to the high school portion of the curriculum beginning in the 1928-29 school year.²⁶ This certification was needed by those who wished to enter a

secretarial career after completing high school.²⁷

The advent of commercial certification, which remained in the curriculum until the school's demise in 1934, can be viewed in a number of ways. One interpretation is that as late as 1928, the school had sufficient promise to expand its course offerings and was well respected enough to obtain state certification. Of course, the move could also be viewed as further evidence of the school's decline as it moved its curriculum away from a traditional liberal arts program. The case at the time probably lay somewhere between these two notions. Whether this was a positive development or not, it did not accomplish what the college desperately needed—an infusion of more students. In 1928, before the addition of the commercial course, twenty-eight degrees were conferred; two years later the number of degrees had fallen to twenty-four—for twenty-two students since two students received both a commercial and a high school degree.²⁸

The financial uncertainty had a negative impact on the faculty which in turn affected the curriculum. Dutch-language courses, offered from the founding, ceased when Professor

A. Cleveringa left after the 1925-26 school year.

During the school's first ten years a significant amount of faculty continuity existed. Four out of the six original faculty stayed at Grundy College for at least four years. The last original faculty member, excepting Bode, was Lylas King, who had died suddenly in 1928. Toward the end of the 1925-26 school year, professors Kuiper, Plesscher, Bajema, and Cleveringa became dissatisfied with their inadequate financial compensation from the struggling college. A dispute ensued between these four professors and Bode and the college board. During this Plesscher and Bajema, and Cleveringa resigned, but ultimately withdrew their resignations. But the dispute was the beginning of regular faculty turnover. Three changes in staff were necessary during the 1927-1928 school year. Four changes were made the year after.²⁹ These were sizable changes in a full-time faculty totaling six or seven.

A lingering problem for Grundy was its adversarial relationship with Western Christian Academy, a high school that had been organized in Hull, Iowa, subsequent to Grundy's foundation. Western Christian officials

proposed in 1929 to consolidate the operations of the two schools by enlarging the Hull campus and moving all Grundy operations to Hull.³⁰ The proposal was rejected outright by Bode, the Grundy board, and the entire Grundy faculty. Because of the adversarial atmosphere that had developed between Western Christian and Grundy, the likelihood that the staffs of the two institutions could have worked together in harmony was minimal, in spite of whatever advantages such a merger might have had.

Following the 1929-30 school year and with the ill economic effect of a worsening depression, the school began a daily struggle for existence. Almost everything done at the school during this time was marked by one overarching constraint: severe and debilitating financial problems. Although the will to succeed and the moral support of constituency remained, they were not sufficient to overcome the lack of liquid assets. At times faculty took their pay in the form of coal from the school stockpile, but they needed more than heating fuel to survive.

The end of Grundy came in September 1934, more like an unoiled gear grinding slowly to a halt than like a sudden application of a brake. This is evident in the school's financial records. In the period from July 1916 through December 1917, Grundy took in well over \$110,000 in funds, with nearly \$24,775 earmarked for college endowments in the calendar year 1917 alone.³¹ Receipts oscillated between \$30,000 to \$50,000 per annum from 1918 through the 1930.³² The total debt for the college in 1930 was slightly over \$35,000. The greatest trouble started in 1931, when only \$18,000 was received. By 1933 the amount had fallen to a paltry \$3,194.³³ Such revenues meant the school could barely service its debt, without providing for faculty and students. During the worst years of the Great Depression the school's constituency spent their limited funds on their most immediate needs. For farmers dealing with debt on their assets and the threat of foreclosure, the needs of Grundy were secondary as is clear by the revenues in 1933. An already shaky financial situation was made worse in 1933 and

ultimately made it impossible for the school to continue.

Now to return to the original question, was Grundy College a place of broken promises or the progenitor of an undying legacy? In the opinion of the author neither of these views is tenable. Clearly the end of the school was the end of unmet promises. But the end came despite valiant efforts to the contrary. Bode worked tirelessly to develop Grundy College exactly along the lines he and Classis Ostfriesland first envisioned, until he resigned in 1930. His many attempts at enlarging the school—be it in mission, goals, or physical size—were thwarted repeatedly by forces beyond his control. Bode and Classis Ostfriesland had diligently pursued a noble, but ultimately unsuccessful, dream.

Was it then the beginning of an undying legacy? The idea of an institution of Christian Reformed higher education west of the Mississippi resurfaced after World War II and was an element in the efforts that led to the founding of Dordt College during the 1950s. But, Grundy and Dordt are two distinctly different



Faculty and students during the 1920s. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

Endnotes

1. Valerie Van Kooten, "Grundy College: An Enduring Legacy," *The Banner*, February 4, 1991, 20-21.
2. Ibid.
3. *Acts of Synod, Christian Reformed Church*, 1896, 51. In 1957 the Classis was reorganized again, and now bears the name Classis Northcentral Iowa.
4. Henry Zwaanstra, "Grundy College: 1916-1934." In *Perspectives on the Christian Reformed Church: Studies in Its History, Theology, and Ecumenicity*, eds. Peter De Klerk and Richard R. De Ridder (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) 109.
5. From Grundy College Faculty Record Book, p. 6, 11/3/1916; p. 10, 1/8/1917. Hereafter cited as Faculty Records.
6. John J. Timmerman, *Markings on a Long Journey: Writings of John J. Timmerman*, ed. Rodney J. Mulder and John H. Timmerman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) 136.
7. *The Grundy Center Democrat*, March 30, 1916, 1.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., July 20, 1916, 1.
10. Ibid., October 5, 1916, 1.
11. *Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, 1916, 33-34.
12. W.M. Bode, "Our Western College," *The Banner*, February 1, 1917, 80.
13. Ibid., February 15, 1917, 108.
14. Henry Beets, "Grundy Center College's New Dormitory," *The Banner*, August 16, 1917, 520-21.
15. *Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, pp. 68-74. English translation available in the Archives at Calvin College.
16. Henry Beets, "The Grundy Center School, A Plea for It," *The Banner*, September 26, 1918, 688.
17. Henry Beets, "A School in Grundy County Iowa," *The Banner*, April 27, 1916, 269. Western Christian Academy was built in Hull two years after this quote.
18. Beets, "The Grundy Center School," 689.

19. *The Grundy College Messenger*, 1930, 36.
20. Zwaanstra, "Grundy College: 1916-1934," 125.
21. Ibid., 125-29.
22. Dave Lace, "Grundy College Years Recalled," *The Marshalltown Times Republican*, January 1964, 1.
23. *The Grundy College Messenger*, 1930, 37.
24. Faculty Records, pp. 147-8, 180, 190-1. Letter from the Calvin Seminary Supervisory Committee to Dr. William Bode, March 8, 1926, Calvin College Archives.
25. George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 2 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996) 1137.
26. *The Grundy College Messenger*, 1930, 38.
27. Deane (Swyter) Luiken, interview by author. Steamboat Rock, IA, March 23, 1999.
28. *The Grundy College Messenger*, 1930, 38.
29. Zwaanstra, "Grundy College: 1916-1934," 137-138.
30. From "Proposals of Western Academy," a letter submitted to the boards of Grundy College and Western Christian Academy in 1929.
31. From Grundy College Financial Records. When I wrote this paper many of Grundy College's financial records survived at the Lincoln Center Christian Reformed Church, northeast of Grundy Center. They were quite disorganized and were beyond my capacity to cite properly. They were far from complete, and were mostly handwritten in different sections of about ten hardbound notebooks. They have now been transferred to Dordt College and microfilmed copies have been made and added to the Calvin College Archives. Calculations given in this report are from what I was able to figure out during my visit to Lincoln Center CRC on March 22, 1999.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.

Endnotes
 1. Valerie Van Kooten, "Grundy College: An Enduring Legacy," *The Banner*, February 4, 1991, 20-21.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Acts of Synod, Christian Reformed Church, 1896, 51. In 1957 the Classis was reorganized again, and now bears the name Classis Northcentral Iowa.
 4. Henry Zwaanstra, "Grundy College: 1916-1934." In *Perspectives on the Christian Reformed Church: Studies in Its History, Theology, and Ecumenicity*, eds. Peter De Klerk and Richard R. De Ridder (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) 109.
 5. From Grundy College Faculty Record Book, p. 6, 11/3/1916; p. 10, 1/8/1917. Hereafter cited as Faculty Records.
 6. John J. Timmerman, *Markings on a Long Journey: Writings of John J. Timmerman*, ed. Rodney J. Mulder and John H. Timmerman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) 136.
 7. *The Grundy Center Democrat*, March 30, 1916, 1.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Ibid., July 20, 1916, 1.
 10. Ibid., October 5, 1916, 1.
 11. Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1916, 33-34.
 12. W.M. Bode, "Our Western College," *The Banner*, February 1, 1917, 80.
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 15. Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, pp. 68-74. English translation available in the Archives at Calvin College.
 16. Henry Beets, "The Grundy Center School, A Plea for It," *The Banner*, September 26, 1918, 688.
 17. Henry Beets, "A School in Grundy County Iowa," *The Banner*, April 27, 1916, 269. Western Christian Academy was built in Hull two years after this quote.
 18. Beets, "The Grundy Center School," 689.

Reformed Bible College: Higher Education for Lay and Mission Workers

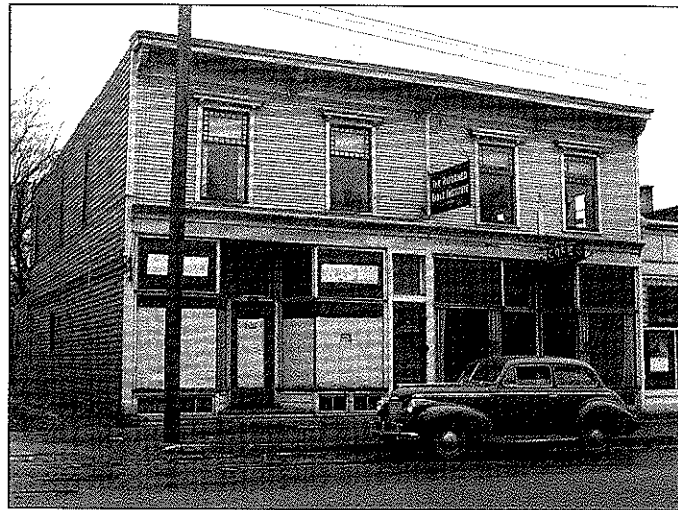
Dan F. Bloem

In 1912 the pastor of Prospect Park Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, Rev. H. (Henry) J. Kuiper, asked his church to find someone to assist him in establishing an evangelism program in the city. The congregation agreed to hire such a lay person, if one could be found. Kuiper found John VandeWater and

Bible study classes for non-church members. The lay leaders of these classes were encouraged to enroll in the Moody Bible Institute to better learn the methods of inner-city evangelism. The institute, however, was Armenian in emphasizing human free-will, and premillennial and dispensational in its view of the Bible, all of

which were contrary to the Reformed understanding of biblical teaching.

Suggestions that the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) start its own training program received little attention since the denomination was expending all of its available home missions funds (missions within the United States and Canada except for work with Native



The school's first home was on the second floor of 706 Wealthy Street, SE in Grand Rapids, 1946. Photo: Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

people, which then fell under the purview of foreign missions) on service for newly arriving immigrants from the Netherlands. It wasn't until 1936 that the CRC formally established the General Home Missions Committee charged to reach out to all the non-church members in North America.

Meanwhile the Chicago churches did their best to train Bible study class leaders. With the onset of the Great Depression resources for this effort dwindled and the programs waned. But beginning in 1937 the Chicago

the two established a city mission effort in Holland. When Kuiper accepted the call to lead the Second Englewood congregation on Chicago's south side, VandeWater went there so that the two could carry forward their passion for community evangelism. Upon their arrival, Kuiper and VandeWater discovered that the Chicago area churches already were involved in such an effort at the Helping Hand Mission, near downtown. In addition, several congregations in Cicero and the Roseland areas of Chicago were conducting evening

people, which then fell under the purview of foreign missions) on service for newly arriving immigrants from the Netherlands. It wasn't until 1936 that the CRC formally established the General Home Missions Committee charged to reach out to all the non-church members in North America. Meanwhile the Chicago churches did their best to train Bible study class leaders. With the onset of the Great Depression resources for this effort dwindled and the programs waned. But beginning in 1937 the Chicago

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Origins

Helping Hand Mission restarted its evening class program and training for the instructors was formalized in May 1937.

Rev. George Weeber, superintendent of Helping Hand, and Mark Fakkema, of the National Union of Christian Schools, took it upon themselves to provide the necessary instruction. The curriculum of this Reformed Bible Institute (RBI) consisted of four courses taught on Monday nights and two, added later, on Wednesday nights.¹

At the same time, a city mission program had become well established in Grand Rapids, Michigan, thanks to the efforts of Kuiper and VandeWater, who had come to the furniture city in 1929 when Kuiper accepted a call from

Broadway Avenue CRC. Kuiper remained in various posts in Grand Rapids until he retired as editor of *The Banner* in 1956. Other serious interest in such a training program came from Denver, Colorado, and the 1936 synodical decision about Home Missions led the regional church governing body, Classis Illinois, to petition the CRC Synod in 1938 to support this effort on a denominational level since local resources were not available.² Given the economic times, such resources were also lacking at the denominational level.

Lacking such support, the leadership decided that a formal day school, patterned after the Christian day schools with its own board of directors, was needed.³ Meeting in Grand Rapids on 28 March 1939 the Reformed Bible Institute (RBI) was officially organized with H.J. Kuiper as

president of the board, John C. De Korne vice president, Mark Fakkema secretary, and George Stob as treasurer. One of the first questions was the location of the RBI, both Chicago and Grand Rapids having supporters. Initially Chicago was selected but on 26 July this decision was rescinded and Grand Rapids was chosen.⁴ That fall the upper floor of the building at 706-8 Wealthy Street (a café building)



Initially the entire faculty, Johanna Timmer teaching an early class. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

was rented, refurbished and one-half the space was prepared for instruction, the other half set up as dormitory space for ten women students. Men rented rooms in the neighborhood. Due to the large number of applicants for the dormitory space, by October the building at 714-16 Wealthy was rented as the women's dormitory. Instruction above the café often competed with the aromas rising from below.

A three-year curriculum with a Reformed basis was designed to prepare students for lay evangelism. There was no tuition but all students were required to pay a \$10 registration fee. Financial support was to come from fundraising efforts and via membership fees in the RBI Association. The academic facilities consisted of a large classroom, a small classroom, and a library. Furnishings for the

rooms came from gifts solicited from the community.

One of the founding board members, Johanna Timmer, a member of the faculty and dean of women at nearby Calvin College, was selected as the first instructor and dean of students. A graduate of Calvin College (AB) and the University of Michigan (MA) Timmer also had taken classes at Calvin Theological Seminary, Chicago Presbyterian Seminary and the University of Chicago Divinity School. In addition to her position at Calvin, she had organized and led the American Federation of Reformed Young Women's Societies. Early in her life, Timmer had felt the calling to mission work but health prevented her from going to the CRC foreign mission fields. Instead she went into teaching, but always with an interest in evangelism.

At the request of the board, she agreed to quit her faculty position at Calvin and begin a speaking tour to recruit the first class of students for the new school. Her \$4,000 annual salary was guaranteed by individual trustees, since the school did not yet have a budget. She traveled to visit communities of Reformed people across the country, and by December 1939 she had established commitments from several potential students. What particularly appealed to these students was the prospect of biblical study in the proposed concentrated manner.

As a result, Timmer's role changed that December from being an apologist and recruiter for the school to becoming an administrator and teacher in the school. Convocation was held in the Sherman Street CRC on 4 January 1940 with eighteen full-time students, all women but one. They came from Canada and seven of the States. The following morning registration was held and classes began. Evening classes for the forty-two part-time students began a week later. These

students came primarily from the metropolitan Grand Rapids area, but there was a student from Massachusetts and one from the Netherlands.⁵

Timmer served as classroom teacher, dean of students, counselor, and administrator during those critical early years.

The full-time curriculum consisted of seven courses, and classes met for fifteen hours per week. The courses were: Bible Introduction, The Gospels, Principles of Missions, Bible Doctrine, English, Bible History and Observation. Timmer taught the latter five courses. The evening school had three courses: Personal Evangelism, Bible Doctrine and English. Timmer taught the latter two. Three CRC pastors, William Van Peursem, William Hendriksen, and Cornelius Schoolland taught the remaining courses on a part-time basis. Coming to assist Timmer soon afterward was her close friend Nella Mierop, who taught the music classes and provided instrumental instruction.

In 1943 the board decided that the work load had grown to such a point that a full-time president was needed

for the school. A call was extended to Rev. Dick H. Walters, pastor of Central Avenue CRC in Holland, Michigan. He agreed to come, and with his pastoral disposition taught the Bible classes. Timmer continued to teach, to head deputation teams of students visiting supporting churches, and to counsel the students.

By 1951, when Timmer and Mierop left RBI to serve as principal and teacher, respectively, in the Christian elementary school in Ripon, California, the full-time RBI faculty in addition to Walters also included Rev. John Schaal and Katie Gunnink, a 1944 alumna. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Schaal also edited Sunday school instructional material for years. In her last year at RBI, Timmer taught Bible Doctrine in addition to Principles of Missions, Public Speaking, Social Problems, Interpretative Reading, English, and Composition.

When Walters accepted the appointment as president in 1943, the school was already preparing to move into a larger facility. The year previous, the building at 330 Eastern was

purchased from the YMCA for dormitory space. With this acquisition the space at 714 Wealthy was no longer needed and the space at 706-708 Wealthy was devoted entirely to classrooms. In 1945, a house at 1230 Lake Drive was acquired for classrooms, the library, office space, and dormitory space in the basement. With this purchase, 706-708 Wealthy was no longer needed.

The need to accommodate growth was an ongoing phenomenon of Walters's 24-year tenure. In 1947 the entire campus was moved to a new location due to growing enrollment. The Heber Curtis home at 1869 Robinson Road was purchased for \$65,000, significantly less than the \$140,000 asking price, and it became the classroom and administration building on the new campus. In honor of Johanna Timmer's pioneering efforts, the building was named for her. In addition the house at 1245 Lake Drive was acquired for dormitory space, 1230 Lake Drive was converted exclusively to dormitory space and the house at 330 Eastern was sold.

Instruction from the school's faculty



Students, faculty and board members, 1940. Rev. H.J. Kuiper, one of the founding forces is in the front row, far left. Photo: Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

Origins

was not limited to the boundaries of the new Robinson Road campus. Evening classes to train lay and mission workers were held throughout western and northern Michigan. Faculty members traveled to instruct church groups, Sunday school teachers, and any other groups interested in teaching Bible studies. Further, correspondence courses were conducted for those too distant from Michigan. A benefit of

tive space was obtained through new construction in 1958, the formal process for obtaining accreditation began. The accrediting agency, the American Association of Bible Colleges (AABC), which had granted intermediate accreditation in 1952, expressed concern about the relatively small RBI library. Due to the school's financial limitations, nothing could be done about this immediately. But in 1962

ever-changing needs of evangelism work, focussing particularly on evangelism outside of North America. Among these were programs developed during the 1960s and 1970s for evangelism training in Mexico and the Middle East. Further, he took up the task of expanding the three-year curriculum into a four-year degree-granting program.

Following completion of the



The house at 330 Eastern, SE was purchased in 1942 to meet the growing need for dormitory space. Photo: Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

these efforts was that they served as an effective means for recruiting students for the classes being taught at the Grand Rapids campus, whose student body began to include students from Europe and Asia.

When some of these students wanted to obtain education beyond what RBI was offering, they discovered that the lack of accreditation prevented transferring credits to most degree-granting institutions. The exception was Barrington College in Providence, Rhode Island, which granted AB degrees to RBI students after one additional year of study. Despite the recognition from Barrington, the lack of accreditation was problematic since not every student wanted to continue studying at Providence.

During the late 1950s, after additional classroom and administra-

the school received the library from the estate of H.J. Kuiper, who had served as the president of the board of trustees from 1939 until his death in 1962. The additional 2,500 books allayed the AABC's concerns about the library. Also, in preparing for accreditation, a physical education program was added to the curriculum in 1964. Following approval of the self-evaluation study, full AABC accreditation was granted on 27 September 1964.

Because of ill health, Walters retired as president in the summer of 1966, but continued to teach until his death on 10 December 1967. Dr. Dick L. Van Halsema, pastor at Central Avenue CRC in Holland, Michigan, like Walters before him, was chosen as the new president. Van Halsema took up the task of continuing to expand the programs offered at RBI to meet the

purchase of four homes adjacent to the campus in 1968 (named North, South, East, and West halls). RBI was able to sell the houses at 1230, 1245 and 1301 Lake Drive, and locate on a single campus for the first time since the early 1940s. Van Halsema also undertook the challenging task of obtaining approval from the State of Michigan to become a degree-granting institution.

He began by submitting a 62-page report to the State Board of Education. Two years of negotiation fol-

lowed, but in June 1970 the state granted permission for RBI to grant a four-year Bachelors in Religious Education (BRE) degree. This new status allowed RBI to become the Reformed Bible College.

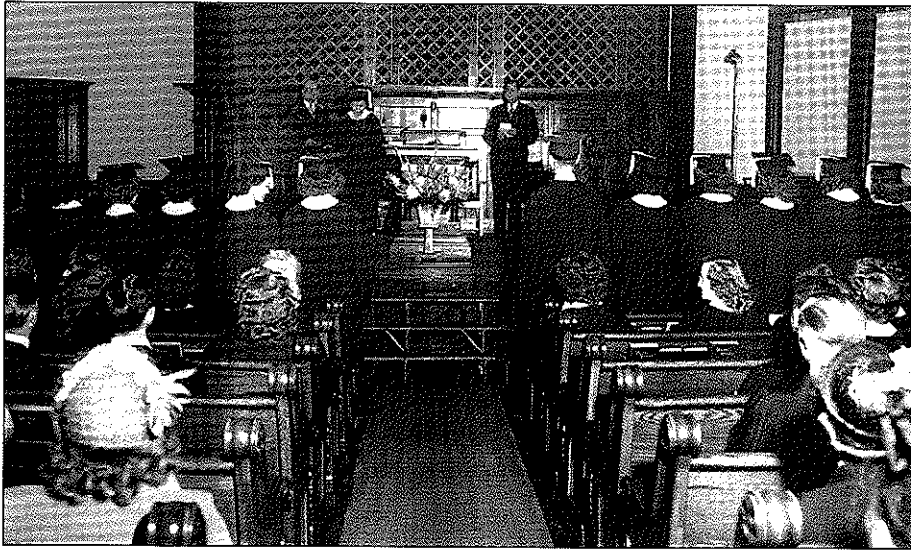
Although Van Halsema had hoped to leave the school following the state approval, new, formidable challenges arose. With a dramatic drop in enrollment, only 68 students were on campus in 1969. At the same time financial support began to wane.⁶ Led by Van Halsema and the board chairman, Rev. Calvin Bolt, faculty, staff, trustees and alumni set about dealing with these challenges. Graduating the first BRE students in 1972 also helped enrollment as students were assured they now could easily transfer credits if they wanted additional education. From 1973 onward, fall enrollments

were consistently over 200. Dealing with the financial concerns was a bit more challenging given those years of very high inflationary rates. But again, thanks in part to the support from and work of the RBI Association, the necessary funding was obtained.

During the process of dealing with these challenges during the 1970s, critical self-evaluations of the curriculum, pedagogical methods, and organizational structure were conducted. As a result faculty members were added to the staff to teach English, speech, history, communication, sociology, social work, Spanish, and Greek. In 1980 the faculty included 17 full-time and 12 part-time people.

The larger enrollments, expanded curriculum and additional faculty necessitated new facilities. The library's holdings had continued to grow, necessitating expansion of the library-classroom building in 1974. That same year a neighboring house was purchased for student housing. Schaal Residence Hall was built in 1976 and the Walters Campus Center housing business offices and food services was completed in 1978.

The experiences of the 1970s convinced the board of trustees that a new long-range campus development plan was necessary. In 1979 this planning effort led to a call for a new physical education structure, a new library, and two residence units for the campus that had grown to seventeen acres. Announcement of these plans raised concerns among RBC's neighbors that a larger campus would



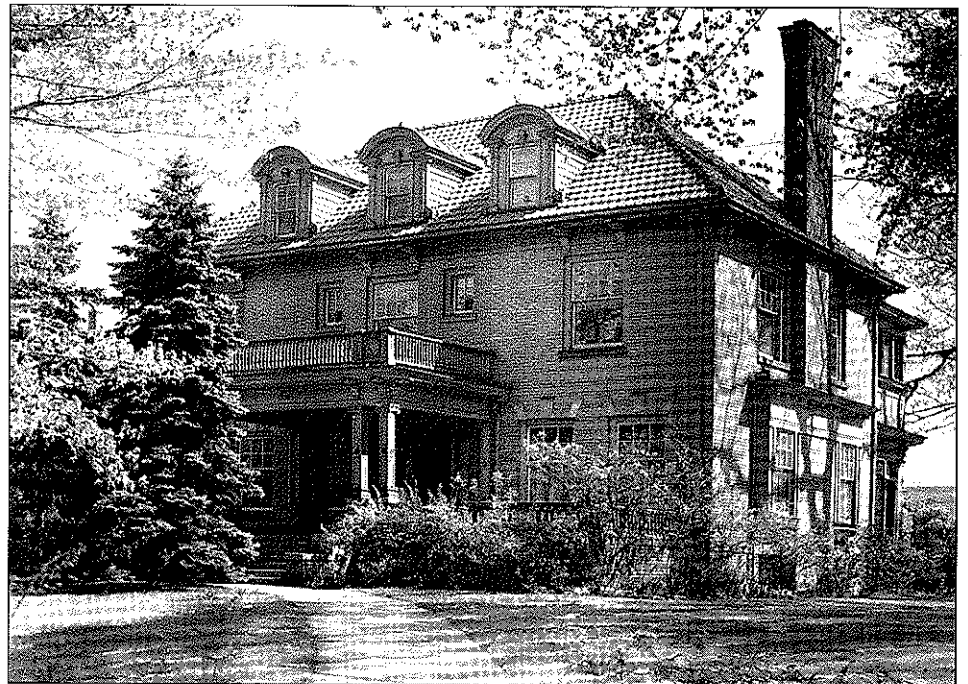
Graduation 1948 in the Bates Street Christian Reformed Church. Photo: Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

have a negative impact on the residential character of the area. Opposition from these neighbors blocked approval of plans by the Grand Rapids Planning Commission. But through the process RBC was able to develop better relationships with its neighbors who, in 1987, the year Van Halsema retired, did not object to

construction of a new library. Prior to retiring, Van Halsema received a commitment from P.J. (Pat) and Mary Zondervan, who were in the process of selling the Zondervan Publishing Company to HarperCollins, to fund construction of a separate new library when the college was ready for this step.

Dr. Edwin D.

Roels was appointed the new president in 1987. As part of becoming acquainted with RBC, Roels accepted an invitation to have lunch with Dr. Peter O'Connor, president of neighboring Aquinas College. During their meeting, it became clear that both the 60-acre Aquinas campus and 17-acre RBC campus were too small to meet the needs of the individual



The house at 1230 Lake Drive was acquired in 1945 and used for classrooms, the library, office space, and dormitory space in the basement. Photo: Local History Department, Grand Rapids Public Library.

Since real estate was not for such expansion, the was made that perhaps one would buy the campus of the first to expand and funds for the second to Since RBC was the smaller conversation moved in the of RBC's selling to Aquinas. mission led to formal negotia- The sale, which was finalized 88-88.

question for RBC was: where new campus be located? A college campus in Florida as were sites in California Each of these various unique advantages and was

Further, Chicago had convenient air access to the world.

Then a Grand Rapids area site was offered. Sunshine Christian Reformed Church, in the midst of growth, was erecting a new worship center across the East Beltline from their existing facility. The congregation offered its 17-acre parcel to RBC, but since the school had sold its existing campus of the same size due to anticipated long-range growth the offer was declined. Church officials asked for a week's extension to develop a different proposal. They returned with a proposal for 29 acres, their 17 acres plus a bordering 12 acres that included a house and an orchard. The proposal was accepted and negotiations completed for acquisition of the site. On graduation day 1989, ground was broken for the new campus.

The following year, classes began on the new campus designed by board member Dan Vos. Among the first structures was the Zondervan Library, Vos Chapel, Van Halsema Classrooms, Walters Dining Room and DeWitt Student Center. Currently the campus has twelve buildings.

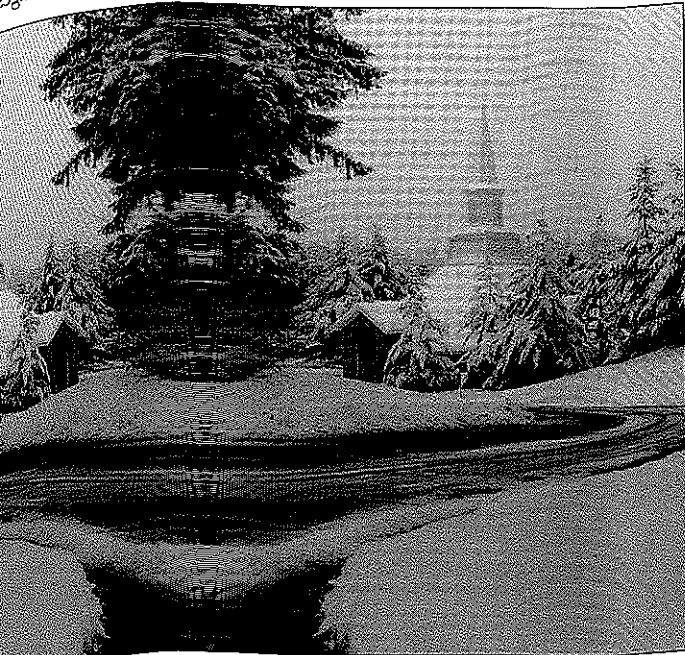
In 1995 RBC received accreditation from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a regional accrediting agency. This accreditation allows the school to grant a B.S. degree in addition to the BRE. The first fourteen BS students graduated in 1998. Another change in 1995 was the appointment of Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze to replace retiring President Roels.

In spite of the growth and changes described, RBC remains committed to preparing students for church and mission vocations. The present curriculum for all four-year BRE and



Rev. Dick Walters was the first full-time president. His tenure was characterized by growth, expansion and new locations. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

BS students (currently totaling 286) requires a major in Bible and theology and a second major in one of twelve career tracks, including church education, cross-cultural studies, evangelism, church growth, urban ministries, social work, and youth ministry. ☼



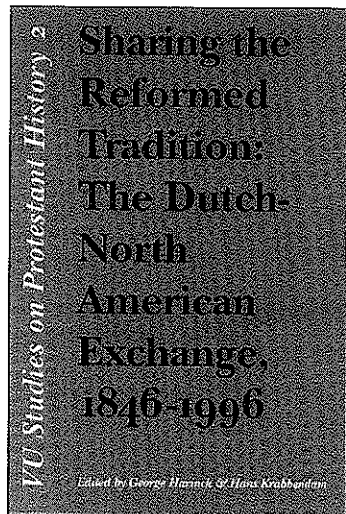
Bible College Vos Chapel on the new campus on the East Beltline in Grand Rapids. Photo: Archives, Calvin College.

The Florida campus renovation. The campus was in an area lacking a reformed institution of higher learning and RBC could serve at the heart of outreach to that community. Chicago location would be a college's roots and the Hour office, which outreach to the world.

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2. *Acts of the 1938 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church*, Art. 39 and Supplement XIII, Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3. Fakkema, "History of the RBI Movement."
4. William Van Peursum, "Small Beginnings of RBI-1940," in 59th Anniversary Booklet Committee, *Born in Faith, Nurtured in Prayer*, RBC (Grand Rapids: Reformed Bible College, 1989): 2-6.
5. Ibid.
6. Dick L. Van Halsema, "RBC's Golden Anniversary," in 59th Anniversary Booklet Committee, *Born in Faith, Nurtured in Prayer*, RBC (Grand Rapids: Reformed Bible College, 1989): 26-33.

book notes



**Sharing the Reformed
Tradition: The Dutch-North
American Exchange,
1846-1996**

VU Studies on Protestant History 2

*Edited by George Harinck and
Hans Krabbendam*

Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996

The papers collected here were written by scholars from the Netherlands, the United States and Canada. The kinship, influence and reciprocal relevance of ideas and social patterns shared by both leaders and their followers in Reformed communities on both sides of the Atlantic are the strands of thought which bind

together the observations of each essayist writing on a particular aspect of Dutch-North American interaction during the last century and a half. Found in the editorial introduction, "Sharing the Reformed Tradition," is a concise summary of each contributor's thoughts plus a few concluding paragraphs outlining future fields for research.

Embodying this transatlantic traffic of religious and cultural ideas is Albertus C. Van Raalte, whom Elton Bruins characterizes as "an American Moses." For James Bratt, Abraham Kuyper's opinions of America in all its political, cultural and religious dimensions were molded by his preconceived suppositions, at times not too realistic, about America's historical development, destiny, and relationship with his homeland. Valentijn Hepp, a Dutch theologian and promoter of Kuyper's new brand of Calvinism, visited America in 1924 and again in 1930. In the view of George Harinck, Hepp failed in his attempts to lend vitality to an international exchange of ideas between Reformed thinkers in America and the Netherlands.

For Hans Krabbendam, the American temperance movement helped advance the cause in the Netherlands, though over time the anti-liquor sentiment in America waned. No longer was the

American effort a shining example for the Dutch to emulate. Though the temperance movement did not thrive in Holland, gospel hymns imported from America had, as Jan Smelik stipulates, a warm reception there even though a few Reformed leaders in the Netherlands questioned both the theological content of the lyrics and the tunes utilized.

Citing other historians with whom he agrees, Robert Swierenga mentions that Dutch immigrants adjusted rather rapidly to their American social and economic environment but did not easily surrender their traditional values on matters of church and faith. Also here Swierenga presents an analysis of the immigrant experience based on comparative statistical evidence.

Other essays include Aileen Van Ginkel's examination of the differing views of Dutch immigrant pastors and American ministers serving Canadian churches in the 1950s, and Stanley W. Carlson-Thies's thoughtful suggestions that America should adopt Dutch solutions when coping with today's nettlesome issues brought about by religious differences and increasing pluralism in public life.

After reading these thoughtful comments you will realize that Dutch-American scholarly interchange is alive and well.

Reviewed by Conrad Bult

**Breaches and
Bridges:
Reformed
Subcultures
in the
Netherlands,
Germany, and
the United States**

**Breaches and Bridges:
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VU Studies on Protestant History 4

*Edited by George Harinck and
Hans Krabbendam*

Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 2000

In a sequel to *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-North American Exchange, 1846-1996*, essayists here comment in depth about how the religious ideas held by those in various Reformed subcultures played a crucial role in personal and communal adjustments to a specific cultural environment. Also discussed are international relationships between these subcultures, and the terms "bridges" and "breaches" are used as metaphors defining various

components helping or hindering international relationships among these Reformed communities in the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and Germany.

Among the eleven contributions included are Pieter Stokvis's observations on the seceder heritage embodied in the Dutch emigrants who came to America in the late 1840s. Touching on the 1857 secession and the fledgling Christian Reformed Church we find the differing perceptions of Robert P. Swierenga and Melis Te Velde followed by Gerrit Jan Beuker's "German Old Reformed Emigration: Catastrophe or Blessing?" in which the author characterizes this emigration as a mixed blessing particularly beneficial to new world Reformed subcultures.

Of special interest to those who cherish the immigrant heritage of the RCA and the CRC denominations are Herbert Brinks's observations about CRC historian Henry Beets, George Harinck's thoughts on nineteenth-century RCA historiography, and Jelle Faber's examination of the "spiritual cargo" carried across the water by theologians who came to America during the years 1870-1900 and were fond of earlier secession suppositions.

All essays in this volume and its predecessor are of greatest value to knowledgeable scholars. Yet there is something here for anyone who is curious about what made Reformed folk what they are today.

Reviewed by Conrad Bult

for the future

The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of *Origins*.

Selections from J. Marion Snapper's *Memoirs*

Recollections of Bill Colsman

Day of Deliverance, March 30, 1945 by Henry Lammers

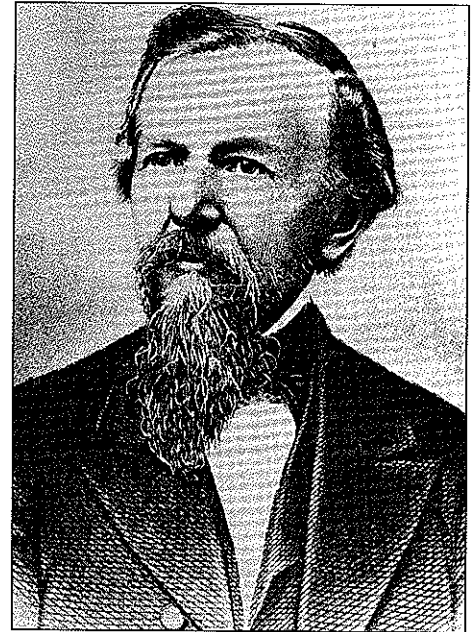
For the Humblest Worshiper: Architectural Styles by Richard Harms

Odyssey of Lambert and Maria Ubels—the Netherlands to California

Wilhelmina Bolier Pool's Whistlestops 1920s by Janet Sheeres

A pictorial essay of the Holland-America Line from postcards and other material collected by Conrad Bult

Celebrating the life of Albertus C. Van Raalte



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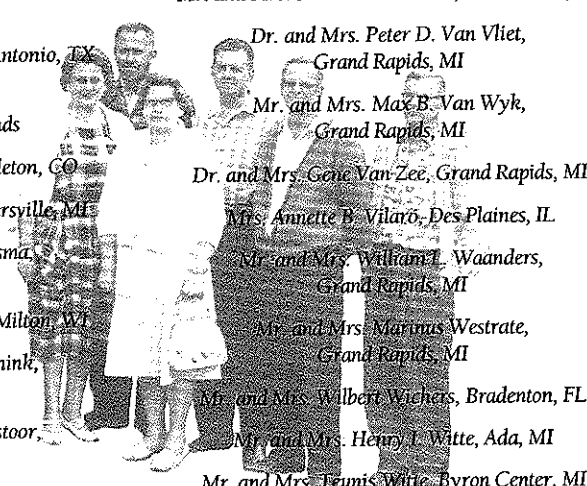
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