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STATE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF IOWA

Annals of Iowa

ESTABLISHED 1863

VOL. XXXVIII, No. 1

DES MOINES, SUMMER, 1965

THIRD SERIES

THE FOUNDING AND FIRST YEAR OF BUENA VISTA COLLEGE

By WILLIAM H. CUMBERLAND

Buena Vista College at Storm Lake, Iowa, will celebrate its 75th anniversary during the academic year 1966-67. Now in the process of becoming one of the better liberal arts colleges in the Midwest, Buena Vista experienced extreme difficulties in its beginning years. Mr. Cumberland's article, a partial preview of his forthcoming book, The History of Buena Vista College, depicts these early struggles along with the lasting vision and determination of the institution's "founding fathers."

Mr. Cumberland, whose full professorship begins this fall, received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, joined the Buena Vista faculty that same year, and is currently Associate Professor of History and Acting Chairman of the Social Science Division.

Within two decades following its incorporation in 1870, the Storm Lake community was ready to undertake the challenge of supporting an institution of higher learning. The 1,682 citizens of Storm Lake in 1890, undertook the venture with enthusiasm.¹ The Yale of the Midwest which they set out to create was slow to materialize, and it was not until after World War II that the college began to progress at a steady pace. The history of Buena Vista College reveals the institution's determined effort to survive in lieu of depression, war, and often a churchly indifference to its success and growth. Only a selfless faculty and a few civic-minded trustees and friends of the college kept it alive during a long era of constant financial crisis.

¹ *Storm Lake Pilot*, July 29, 1891.

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The late 1880's saw the citizens of northwest Iowa take positive steps toward creating a new church-related college. After early competition among Hawarden, Cherokee, and Fort Dodge, the latter was chosen as the most desirable site. Fort Dodge had offered \$10,000 and "grounds suitable and sufficient for the location of the Institute."²

The Fort Dodge Collegiate Institute, however, was not destined to become a success. An unstable enrollment and lack of financial support from both the Presbytery and the citizens of Fort Dodge were responsible for the resignation of President F. L. Kenyon in the spring of 1889. Kenyon was replaced by Rev. Loyal Y. Hays. Reverend Hays, an able and dedicated scholar with wide experience, did his best to salvage the Institute. Indeed, attendance held up relatively well during the years 1889-1891. The term that started September 11, 1889, reveals fifty-four students between the ages of thirteen and twenty-six in attendance. The thirteen year old was Wesley Russell who gave an excellent account of himself except in the areas of United States History and Department.³ A new high in attendance was reached during the term which started on December 1, 1890 and ended on March 13, 1891. During this term eighty-five students were enrolled in the Institute.⁴ The low points were always the spring terms when many male students undoubtedly stayed home to help with the farm work.

The theory that poor attendance killed the Institute is apparently untrue. Attendance remained relatively steady; and upon coming to Storm Lake in the summer of 1891, President Hays remarked that "the preparatory school at Fort Dodge grew into such proportions and promise that new and larger accommodations were an immediate necessity."⁵ While even the devout Hays may have been guilty of some propagandizing, he had other reasons for moving the Institute.

It is plausible to assume that President Hays envisioned a liberal arts college rather than a preparatory school as the Institute at Fort Dodge had been. The question was whether

² *Minutes, Buena Vista College Board of Trustees 1891-1904*, p. 15.

³ *Record, Fort Dodge Collegiate Institute*, pp. 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

⁵ *Storm Lake Pilot*, July 29, 1891.

or not the Fort Dodge community or some other community could undertake the more formidable task of supporting a liberal arts institution. In April, 1891, the Presbyteries of Fort Dodge and Sioux City issued a statement to the effect that it was "useless for the Institute to carry on its work longer without increased facilities for doing so."⁶ Soon Rolfe and Storm Lake entered the spirited bidding for the new college of north-west Iowa. The citizens of Rolfe, led by Rev. A. C. Keeler, offered nine acres of land plus ready money for buildings if the Presbyteries would agree to move the Institute and provide a \$3,000 grant. The following month, Storm Lake indicated that if the Presbyteries showed a real readiness to take action, they would present the most liberal offer yet.⁷

Meanwhile, the Trustees of the Collegiate Institute at Fort Dodge made a desperate but futile effort to solicit the \$30,000 deemed necessary to expand the school. On May 19, 1891, the Presbyteries resolved not only to "enlarge the Fort Dodge Collegiate Institute and shape it as the foundations of a college"⁸ but also to locate "said Institute at some other point . . . if deemed wise to do so."⁹ A subsequent meeting was scheduled for Storm Lake on June 10th.

The *Storm Lake Pilot* was jubilant. In its May 20th, 1891 issue the *Pilot* assured its readers that Rolfe had given up the fight and that Storm Lake would now secure the college. A college was desirable because it would mean (1) many families of the best citizens would become permanent residents (2) a ready sale of property (3) added sales and profits for every business.¹⁰

While the *Pilot's* aspirations were obviously business-oriented, those of President Hays were cultural and moral. He found Storm Lake a "classical little city" and remarked:

Everything that can be done to care for the health and morals of the students is provided in this beautiful little lakeside city, far from saloons and all the temptations of a big city. Here the

⁶ *Minutes, Board of Trustees*, p. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17. The preparatory aspects of the Collegiate Institute were to be retained at Storm Lake.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Storm Lake Pilot*, July 28, 1891.

quiet groves and parks, and the lake smiling in its purity, invites students to study and pure living.¹¹

It is more than possible that President Hays' advocacy of Storm Lake as the site for the new college was due to the fact, that, unlike Fort Dodge, Storm Lake had no saloons. In the new college's first announcement Hays pointed out that Storm Lake did not have the "morally dangerous elements" of its predecessor and that it was a community where the "sale of intoxicating liquors is not only prohibited, but any lot on which a Saloon should be set up, forfeits its title."¹² The new college, the announcement continued, "invites young people to the pure, sweet influence of a small city of idyllic beauty, with no temptations such as are inevitable in a large city."¹³

The failure of the Fort Dodge trustees to raise a substantial subscription, the withdrawal of the candidacy of Rolfe, and the attractive offer of a suitable site by Storm Lake, assured the college for the latter community. A month after the June 10th meeting in Storm Lake, the Storm Lake Town Lot and Land Co., through their representative, Mr. Zeph Charles Felt, offered to donate a campus of eight acres and "to erect thereupon buildings of the value of \$25,000 suitable for college purposes upon the following conditions:

- I. The title to said land and buildings shall be vested in a board of 17 trustees, 9 of whom shall be named by this company, four of the said 9 to be members of the Presbyterian Church.
- II. That the said Presbyteries of Fort Dodge and Sioux City shall agree to the satisfaction of the following named trustees viz: E. E. Mack, J. R. Lemon, Z. C. Felt, George Witter, A. D. Bailie, S. J. Rowell, W. C. Kinne, E. C. Cowles and J. P. Morey, known as the trustees of the college fund of this company, to equip and maintain in Storm Lake, Iowa, a college of liberal arts.
- III. That so long as the said property is used in accordance with the foregoing terms it shall be the property of and under control of the said board of 17 trustees. But in

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Announcement of Buena Vista College, 1891-92, p. 5.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

the event of the failure on the part of said Presbyteries of Fort Dodge and Sioux City to successfully maintain in Storm Lake, Iowa, such an institution then the said property shall revert to the said Storm Lake Town Lot and Land Company."¹⁴

The proposal was accepted by the Fort Dodge and Sioux City Presbyteries. Articles of Incorporation were then adopted and a charter secured under the name, Buena Vista College. The name of the new college was selected in "grateful recognition of the substantial interest taken by the people of the County."¹⁵ The Storm Lake paper could now buoyantly proclaim that "what Fort Dodge with all its wealth, could not accomplish, Storm Lake, nobly seconded by the citizens of the county has done."¹⁶

It was already mid-July, 1891, and teachers had to be secured, a curriculum set up, and plans made to construct a suitable college building. Much of the responsibility for this work centered upon President Loyal Hays, who not only handled numerous and difficult administrative duties but also served as Professor of Mental and Moral Science.¹⁷ In the best late 19th century tradition, President Hays taught courses in Psychology, Logic, Ethics, Christian Sciences, Political Economy and Mental Science. In a course called Moral Philosophy the students were expected to write themes such as "The Nature of Virtue, Obligation and Its Various Theories, Moral Rights, Conscience, Restraints and the Will."¹⁸

These areas of instruction were assumed to be natural ones for the president of a denominational college. Such presidents were invariable clergymen. The content of instruction in the collegiate department was essentially classical with Ancient History and Languages being formidable obstacles for aspiring students. There was also a Scientific Course which led to the B.S. rather than the B.A. degree.

An examination of the classical curriculum of the collegiate department in 1892 reveals the nature of the early academic

¹⁴ *Minutes, Board of Trustees*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵ *Storm Lake Pilot*, July 15, 1891.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Minutes, Trustees*, p. 101.

¹⁸ *Announcement, Buena Vista College, 1891, 1892*, pp. 17-18.

struggles of Buena Vista students:

I. FRESHMAN CLASS:

First term – Cicero De Amicitia et De Senectute; Xenophon's Memorabilia; Solid and Spherical Geometry.

Second Term – Livy – Books XXI and XII Xenophon's Memorabilia and Novum Testamentum; Plane and Spherical Trigonometry; Trench's Study of Words.

Third Term – Tacitus, Agricola et Germania; Herodotus; Advanced Algebra; Botany, Plant Structure and Analysis.

Throughout the Year – Latin Prose Composition; Roman History; Selections from English Literature; Bible Lessons.

II. SOPHOMORE CLASS

First Term – Horace, Odes and Epodes; Homer: Measurement, Surveying and Navigation; Milton begun.

Second Term – Horace, Satires and Epistles; Homer and Novum Testamentum; Milton; Analytical Geometry completed.

Third Term – Cicero's Letters; Demosthenes; French, German or Calculus optional; Macauley's Essays; Zoology.

Throughout the Year – Rhetorical Exercises; Selections from English Literature; Bible Lessons.

III. JUNIOR YEAR

First Term – Whately's Rhetoric with Lectures; Chemistry; Mechanics and Hydrostatics with Lectures and Experiments; Practical Ethics; Elective – Greek and Latin Drama, French or German, Calculus.

Second Term – Political Economy; Chemistry with Laboratory Practice; Pneumatics, and Optics; Theoretical Ethics. Elective – Greek and Latin Drama; French or German.

Third Term – Chemistry with Laboratory Practice; Acoustics; Electricity and Practice in the Physical Laboratory; Constitutional Law. Elective – Latin and Greek Drama; French or German.

Throughout the Year – Rhetorical Exercises; Shaw's New English Literature with Selection; Bible Lessons.

IV. SENIOR YEAR

First Term – Psychology with Lectures on the History of Philosophy; Physiographic, Lithological and Historical Geology; Hebrew or German; Shakespeare.

Second Term – Jevons' Logic; Dynamical Geology with Lectures; Astronomy begun; Hebrew or German, Shakespeare.

Third Term – Jevons' Logic completed; Evidence of Christianity; Astronomy completed; Hebrew or German; Methods and Laws of Investigation.

Throughout the Year – Rhetorical Exercises; Elocution; Bible Lessons.¹⁹

President Hays, who had a special interest in classical languages, devised both the curriculum and the college catalog. While the Buena Vista curriculum of 1892 appears alien to the contemporary student mind, it did produce disciplined and humane minds, and was within the tradition of the denominational college.

An instructional staff had to be secured before the opening of the fall term. It was at the July meeting that the Board of Trustees employed Rev. George Herbert Fracker as Professor of Ancient Languages for a salary of \$800.²⁰ From 1891 until his retirement thirty-nine years later, Fracker's life was devoted to the welfare of Buena Vista College. A native of Zanesville, Ohio, Fracker was a graduate of Wooster and Princeton Theological Seminary. He served pastorates at Ashton, Inwood and Vail, Iowa, before starting his long tenure at Buena Vista College. He mastered Latin, Greek, French and German. He was an avid reader and one of those universal scholars so vital to the struggling liberal arts college at the turn of the century.²¹

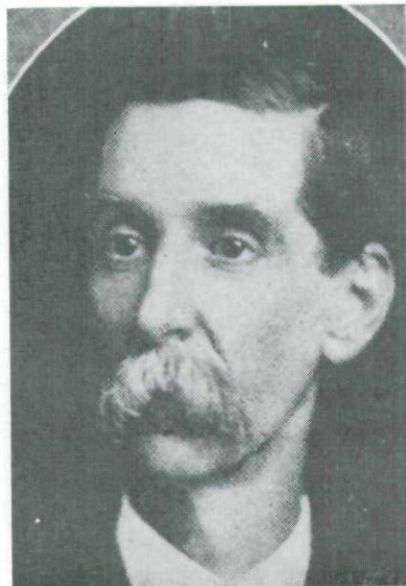
Other members of the original faculty were Dr. J. C. Hutchison, who was appointed Professor of Physics and Chemistry for twenty-five dollars a month and railroad fare; C. Ray Aurner, Principal of the Normal Department at sixty-five dollars per month for nine months; C. W. Von Coelln, Professor of Mathematics; P. B. S. Peters and N. H. Tyson of the Com-

¹⁹ *Catalogue of Buena Vista College, 1891-92*, pp. 14-15.

²⁰ *Minutes, Board of Trustees*, p. 103.

²¹ *The Tack*, February, 1900, pp. 6-7.

mercial Department; Miss Ida Sisson, piano, Miss Mabel Marshall, vocal music, and Miss J. L. Bennett, drawing.



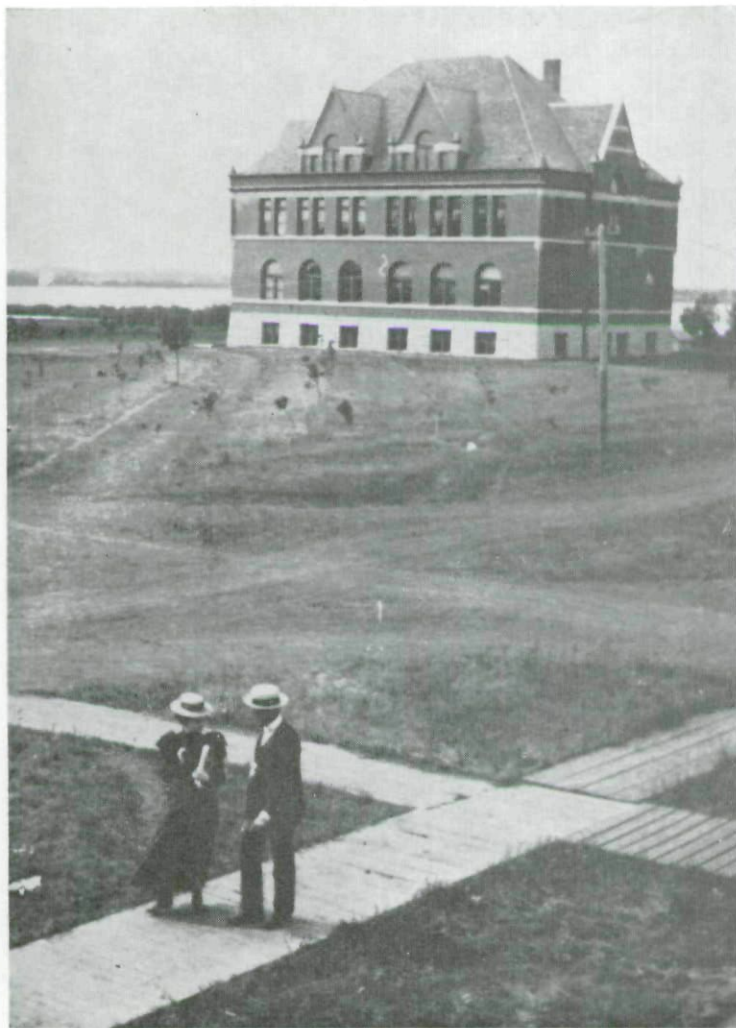
GEORGE HERBERT FRACKER

Because the construction of the main college building was not yet under way, the first classes of Buena Vista College were held in the Opera House on Main street which had been leased for fifteen dollars a month.²² The college announcement asserted that the main college building would be completed by January, 1892. This report was optimistic, but the structure was ready for classes by the autumn of 1892. It was built by the Russell Bros. of Storm Lake. The contractor, Jay M. Russell, built much of early Storm Lake, and his careful work added to his growing reputation as a "thoroughly reliable and competent builder."²³ The Russell brothers manufactured their own brick on a forty-six acre tract of land to the east of Storm Lake.²⁴ The

²² *Minutes, Board of Trustees*, p. 103.

²³ *Storm Lake Pilot*, September 14, 1892.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, June 14, 1928. Mr. Russell had been the engineer of the first



View of "Old Main" in the early 1890's

steamboat to appear on Storm Lake—"The J. D. Eddy." He once traded a threshing machine for 400 acres (believed to be swamp land at the time) in Maple Valley township and in 1891 turned his attention to the manufacturing of brick and tile. He was one of the great pioneers and builders of Storm Lake.

workmen employed in the construction of "Old Main" were mostly Frenchmen.²⁵

Until the "Main Building" could be constructed, however, the Opera House had to suffice. The Opera House was a large, two-story frame building covered with sheet iron. Its dreary atmosphere left a permanent imprint on Buena Vista's pioneer students. One of Buena Vista's early graduates, Rev. E. S. Benjamin, described the now nearly forgotten structure:

Going up the steps from the side walk you entered a hall way between two fairly large rooms, the one on your right being occupied by Dr. Hays, the President, the one on the left was used by instructors in shorthand and typewriting. At the end of the hall, double doors gave entrance to the auditorium, which at that time was the largest in Storm Lake. This auditorium was not used by the College.

Just before you entered the auditorium you went up a flight of stairs, which took you into a large room running the full width of the building and perhaps 20 feet wide. This was the place where in the north end was a low platform with a desk and to one side of the desk a piano. And in front of the platform was an array of loose chairs in which the student body sat for chapel. Also through the day this was the recitation place for the various classes.²⁶

Another student, during that first year, recalled playing "a wheezy old organ for chapel" and having to dodge to "escape great chunks of falling plaster."²⁷ The falling plaster occasionally hit the back of the organ and some of the students "also had some hard cracks."²⁸ The venerable Dr. Fracker in later years recalled that there were seven pupils and eight teachers at the first chapel service.²⁹

The transition from Fort Dodge to Storm Lake was not an easy one. The optimism of mid-July turned to somber forebodings during the crisp autumn days of September and October. The preparatory course at Buena Vista College attracted fewer students than had the preparatory course at Fort Dodge Collegiate Institute. There were only five students to partake

²⁵ *Buena Vista Tack*, October 8, 1956, p. 11. The French "colony" lived on Otsego street.

²⁶ E. S. Benjamin to author, November 2, 1963. Mr. Benjamin attended Buena Vista in different terms, 1891-99. He is a retired Methodist minister and now lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

²⁷ *Storm Lake Pilot*, May 9, 1929. The writer was Anna Von Coelln Stokes. Her father was Prof. of Mathematics, 1892-96.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, March 24, 1927.

of the well-planned curriculum of the classical division of the collegiate department.

The charter members of the collegiate department were Jennie Gordon Hutchison, a junior from Cherokee;³⁰ S. A. Johnson, a Sioux Rapids sophomore; and three freshmen — Bert A. Cowan of Paton, J. R. Hitchings of Sutherland, and D. J. Mereness of Glidden.³¹ The four men students were known as the "big four" to the other students on campus.³² Miss Hutchison became the first liberal arts graduate of the college, receiving her B.A. degree in 1893.³³



JENNIE GORDON HUTCHISON

³⁰ Miss Hutchison was the daughter of Prof. Hutchison of the Dept. of Physics and Chemistry. Prof. Hutchison had according to the *Storm Lake Pilot* taught the physical sciences for thirty years and in 1891 managed the Cherokee Electric Light Plant. Apparently, in 1891 he was to perform the same services for the Storm Lake Plant. See *Storm Lake Pilot*, October 28, 1891.

³¹ *Catalogue, Buena Vista College*, 1892, p. 7.

³² E. S. Benjamin to author, November 2, 1963.

³³ *Minutes, Board of Trustees*, June 7, 1893, p. 128, contains the following notation: "Miss Jennie Gordon Hutchison was granted the degree of B.A. as the first graduate of Buena Vista College." Between 1895 and 1901 Buena Vista operated as a Junior College and no more B.A. degrees were awarded until 1904.

The college year was divided into fall, winter and spring terms. Tuition varied with each term. The charge was \$14.00 for the fall term, \$12.00 for the winter term and \$10.00 for the spring term. This was in the collegiate department with rates in other departments varying with the costs of instruction. The commercial department was the most expensive — the charge for the fall term being \$21.00.³⁴ A student could secure board and room for between \$2.00 and \$3.00 per week. Still, the cost of securing an education seemed high to many students who worked for wages of \$1.00 a day and to their parents in rural Iowa who in the 1890's received six cents for a dozen eggs and \$1.50 a hundred for hogs.³⁵

The difficulties of founding and supporting a college without solid financial backing became apparent almost immediately. The October 27th meeting of the Trustees was held in an atmosphere of depression, and the ensuing discussion centered around the survival of the institution. Finally, the Board reluctantly resolved:

the necessity of a reduction of current expenses and [to] direct the executive committee (of the board) to consult with the members of the faculty with reference to the reduction of the teaching force and salary of those that remain and that said committee make such terms of compromise in settling with or discontinuing teachers now employed as in their judgement may seem for the best interest of the college.³⁶

At the same time, the Board approved a motion which expressed its appreciation to the student body for the loyalty expressed to the college. The Trustees asserted that they were determined "to spare no pains to give them all needed instruction according to the curriculum."³⁷ The Board also elected Mr. E. R. Sisson to serve as the financial agent of the college. Sisson was to receive as compensation for his services "ten per cent of all funds raised by him together with one dollar for each student he would secure for the college."³⁸ Sisson was the first in a long line of financial agents whose expenses came near to outdistancing their collections. The depression of the early 1890's made the work of solicitors difficult, and the churches

³⁴ *Catalogue, Buena Vista College, 1892, p. 22.*

³⁵ *E. S. Benjamin to author, November 22, 1963.*

³⁶ *Minutes, Board of Trustees, p. 105.*

³⁷ *Minutes, Board of Trustees, p. 105.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

and the Presbyterian Board of Aid were sluggish in responding to the call for help.³⁹

Meanwhile, the salary cut, imperative for the salvation of the college, was hardly designed to please the faculty. C. Ray Aurner, principal of the Normal Department, refused to accept a \$50 deduction in salary and resigned. After considerable haggling, the Board and Aurner agreed on a reduction of \$42.25, and Aurner was "not to make any statements that might damage the college."⁴⁰ While most of the academic staff hopefully remained at the college, "back salaries" in the 1890's occupied a seemingly permanent place in the treasurer's reports.

President Hays spoke eloquently in behalf of the institution and its academic needs. The college needed books; and when Mr. Zeph Charles Felt presented the college with eleven volumes of *The Library of American Literature* by Stedman and Hutchison, Reverend Hays saw that it was front-page material for the *Storm Lake Pilot*.⁴¹ "It is the people's college. It belongs to no one man or denomination. Those who help it to become great will have their names and deeds embalmed in the grateful remembrances of this and succeeding generations."⁴² There is no doubt that President Hays loved both the Storm Lake community and the college he helped to create. One of the great days of his life was the day he turned the first spadeful of dirt for the construction of "Old Main." In his typical oratorical style he told a large audience:

The fame of this college will not come to it because of its building, however beautiful and commodious it may be. We never hear of the buildings of Princeton, or Yale or Harvard. The men and women who here shall build characters more durable than brass or granite will be the glory of this institution. . . . Let us hope that this spot may become the Mecca where pilgrims for generations will come in grateful memory for what they enjoyed as

³⁹ The Board of Aid refused to grant Buena Vista College funds as long as the college continued to offer Junior and Senior years of instruction. See *Bulletin, Buena Vista College*, October 26, 1893.

⁴⁰ *Minutes, Board of Trustees*, pp. 106-107.

⁴¹ *Storm Lake Pilot*, March 19, 1892. Mr. Zeph Charles Felt was the first President of the Board of Trustees of Buena Vista College. He was a prominent Storm Lake businessman and a major stockholder in the First National Bank in the early 90's. Late in 1892 the Felt's moved to Denver, Colorado, but remained sincerely interested in the welfare of Buena Vista College.

⁴² *Storm Lake Pilot*, March 19, 1892.

students here. We are now to break this soil in which there has never been a plow or spade, fresh as from the hand of God, and plant here the seed of a college which under God's care and our consecrated toil may bring a harvest that the ages shall gather and garner.⁴³

Such was the spirit of a pioneer president of a denominational college. President Hays "struck the new spade" bought for the occasion and directed that it be kept in the College Museum.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, the fifty-four year-old Hays looked forward to a decade or more of service as President of Buena Vista College. All contemporary accounts of Hays attest to his natural leadership, charm, and devout character. The President had grown to young manhood on his father's farm in Butler County, Pennsylvania. He was a graduate of Washington College and Chicago Theological Seminary. He had served pastorates at Malden and Ottawa, Illinois; Madison, Wisconsin; Springfield, Illinois; Crawfordsville, Indiana; and Mifflintown, Pennsylvania.⁴⁵

The President's labors in the pastorate had always been handicapped by a physical infirmity, the loss of his voice, which on one occasion had forced him to take a leave of absence from his pastoral duties. He traveled to Europe and then to California but finally returned to the Middle West when he discovered that changes in climate provided no cure for the malady. During the months when he was unable to preach, Reverend Hays busied himself with his studies and won at least local reputation as an outstanding scholar in Hebrew.⁴⁶

His duties at Buena Vista were legion. He was the President of the Institution, and he had the tasks of preparing the catalog and of soliciting funds. He was the Professor of Moral and Mental Science which entailed teaching the courses of an entire division. His supreme task, of course, involved the building of an institution from the very roots. The entire Storm Lake community realized that when President Hays fell before frus-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1891.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Buena Vista College Bulletin*, May, 1892, p. 1. President Hays was the father of nine children, five of whom were living at the time of his death. Their names were Emma, Charles, George, Arthur and Mary.

⁴⁶ *Buena Vista College Bulletin*, May, 1892, pp. 2-3.

tration, overwork and the magnitude of his undertakings, Buena Vista College had lost her "best and truest friend."⁴⁷

The end came on the evening of May 16, 1892. The crowds that visited the college campus the first two Sundays in May in order to see the progress of the college building were not aware that the President was suffering a fatal illness. The President had been seized by severe cramps while preaching a sermon at the Presbyterian Church ten days earlier. He had suffered similar attacks on previous occasions and apparently did not realize the seriousness of his condition. A post-mortem examination conducted by Dr.'s Agnew, Kerlin and Hornibrook revealed that gall stones which had ruptured the intestine had been the cause of death.⁴⁸

The funeral was held Wednesday afternoon, May 18, at the Congregational Church. The Trustees served as pall bearers and the funeral oration was delivered by Rev. George P. Folsom of Carroll, Iowa.⁴⁹ Reverend Folsom, who had been a close friend of the Hays family, spoke eloquently to the many mourners: "The educational work of our church in northwest Iowa, from which death has removed him, I think he looked upon with the hope that it might be the crowning result of his life. . . . May his Christian devotion and untiring zeal fall on those who shall carry on this work."⁵⁰

It was a slow, mournful trip to the Storm Lake cemetery. The rains had come in such torrents that those who witnessed the tragic spectacle were to remember it for the rest of their lives. The body of the deceased had to be taken to the cemetery on a railroad handcar. The roads were, as a witness described, "simply impassible."⁵¹ Still another student recalled that after the burial party had waded through mud to the grave they "found it full of water" and so "the casket was placed in the sexton's little house, and several weeks later, I believe, was buried there."⁵²

⁴⁷ *Storm Lake Pilot*, May 18, 1892.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Buena Vista College Bulletin*, May, 1892, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

⁵¹ E. S. Benjamin to author, November 2, 1963.

⁵² *Storm Lake Pilot*, May 9, 1929. The author is Anna Von Coelln Stokes. Mrs. Stokes in the same article recalled that since Storm Lake

The college, which had been planted with such optimism the previous summer, now teetered on the brink of disaster. There were no graduates in the spring of 1892. There was no endowment and the most able academic statesman of the college had been called at the most critical moment imaginable. However, the founders who had envisioned the "Yale of the Midwest" would find that their travail was just beginning. Crisis was to follow crisis and years were to mushroom into decades before Buena Vista College was destined to enjoy the stability and prestige that its founders had intended. And yet, still in the midst of sorrow, President Hays' successor could say:

He is the connecting link between this college and the Fort Dodge Collegiate Institute. He is the recognized founder of this college. Its campus by the Lakeside adorned as it may be in future years and covered by stately buildings will not outgrow his name and fame will be his monument.⁵³

President Loyal Hays left a design. He would be remembered as the "founding father" of the institution.

had at that time no hot houses, "the student girls scoured the town for flowers for the funeral."

⁵³ *Storm Lake Pilot*, May 17, 1893. The remarks were made by President J. M. Linn at a memorial service held in honor of President Loyal Hays.



Baseball Days at Buena Vista College—1899

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