

“We Must Educate!”

Since Calvin, Presbyterians have regarded themselves as constituting a “teaching church.” Wherever they have migrated, schools and colleges have been established. On the western frontier these institutions were especially needed among the new settlers. Dr. Lyman Beecher, a great Presbyterian revivalist, pled for their instruction: “We must educate! or we must perish by our own prosperity!”

Iowa Presbyterians have not been remiss as to this fundamental duty to the people. Four vigorous keepers of the Presbyterian heritage are associated with the Synod of Iowa today: Coe College at Cedar Rapids, the University of Dubuque at Dubuque, Parsons College at Fairfield, and Buena Vista College at Storm Lake. The James Millikin University at Decatur, Illinois, is also associated with the Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana synods as a heritage from the days of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Seminaries and Academies

The earliest efforts among Presbyterians to promote education for Iowans came with the chartering of “seminaries of learning” by the Wisconsin Territorial and Iowa Territorial Legislative As-

semblies, respectively, in 1837 and 1838. Des Moines College at West Point was on this early list. Jefferson Academy, chartered in 1844, became successively Yellow Spring Collegiate Institute and Yellow Spring College. Kossuth Academy, incorporated in 1873, functioned until 1902. Rev. Launcelot G. Bell's "Female Seminary" at Fairfield from 1848 to 1860, and Mount Pleasant Female Seminary from 1863 to the 1880's, rose, served the pioneer generation, and passed on their heritage to public institutions. Alexander College, established at Dubuque in 1852 by the Old School Synod of Iowa, also ceased operation. Corning Academy came later, flourishing between 1885 and 1908 and graduating 170 students. Lenox College at Hopkinton set a good record for accomplishment from its founding in 1856 to its demise in 1947. The United Presbyterians could also show an academy and a college at Washington midway through the last century.

University of Dubuque

The University of Dubuque is celebrating the centennial of its organization this year, 1952. It was begun in 1852 as a training ground for ministers by Rev. Adrian Van Vliet, a Hollander, the founder of German Presbyterianism in the West. The University has passed through stages in turn as a seminary and college to its present university status which includes a theological seminary. It was taken under the care of the Presbyterian Gen-

eral Assembly in 1870, when it became known as the German Theological School of the Northwest. The present site was acquired in 1905.

In the years that followed Dubuque grew rapidly under such able leaders as William O. Ruston, Cornelius M. Steffens, and Dale D. Welch. In 1907 a collegiate department was added. In 1911 the institution had three separate divisions — an academy, a college, and a seminary.

In 1952, the University is working on its program of "Grand Design" — the building of those qualities of courage, vision, humor, humility, and, above all, faith — under the presidency of Dr. Rollo La Porte, who came to the University in 1948. Its present facilities and those currently hoped for and soon to be erected have been pledged to "the preservation and strengthening of the freedoms that we now have," and the achievement of the University's high goals is based upon the "twin ideals of academic excellence and spiritual power."

Coe College

At Cedar Rapids in 1851 Rev. Williston Jones, a New School Presbyterian minister, together with his wife, founded in their cabin a near duplicate of the old "log college" type, for both men and women, which came to be known as Cedar Rapids Collegiate Institute. By 1866 a female seminary was also in operation at Cedar Rapids, and this was followed by Parsons Seminary between 1866 and

1875, "Old Main" being completed in 1868. Daniel Coe of Durham, New York, who had started Jones off with a gift in 1851, now aided in securing eighty acres of campus which derived in part from the estate of Lewis B. Parsons, Sr.

In 1881 a fresh start was made. Parsons Seminary had suspended operations in 1870, and it was not until 1875 that Coe Collegiate Institute was opened. This school was reorganized and renamed Coe College in 1881 with Stephen Phelps as its first president — 1881–1887. In the years that followed Coe College was led by such able men as James Marshall, John A. Marquis, and Harry M. Gage. Coe's fine campus, excellent faculty and courses of study honor its courageous founders. Howell H. Brooks is acting president.

Parsons College

Between the old Yellow Spring College and the longed-for development of Parsons College there existed "an unconscious and potent connection." In due time, General Lewis B. Parsons, Jr., of Civil War fame, aided a number of Presbyterian ministers in its establishment from the legacy of his father, Lewis B. Parsons, Sr. The site chosen was Fairfield, where "thirty gentlemen" met on February 24, 1875, to take steps to incorporate as trustees. The training of young men and women "for life's activities, both of the church and society at large," has remained the principal aim of Parsons College through its more than three-quarters of a

century of service, begun under the presidency of Rev. Alexander G. Wilson, and continued under such able leaders as Thomas D. Ewing, Willis E. Parsons, and Clarence W. Greene. A pleasant campus, excellent facilities, and a faculty of true attainment give Parsons promise of splendid returns under the able presidency of Dr. Tom E. Shearer today.

Buena Vista College

Buena Vista College at Storm Lake developed under the joint sponsorship of the Fort Dodge and Sioux City presbyteries. Between these church bodies and the citizens of Storm Lake agreements were reached in 1891 providing for the removal to Storm Lake of an institute previously functioning at Fort Dodge and actually tracing back to an academy set up at Calliope in 1883. But Buena Vista dates its collegiate existence from the presidency of Rev. L. Y. Hayes in 1891, since which time, in addition, the college has been under the care of the Iowa Synod. Like its sister Presbyterian colleges, Buena Vista seeks to inculcate the Christian way of life. Dr. Henry Olson has been president of the college since 1931.

Westminster Foundation

Through the agency of the Westminster Foundation, Presbyterianism in 1952 sustains the same significant relationships to great academic institutions as advocated and maintained by Calvin, Knox, Dickinson, and Witherspoon (not forget-

ting their worthy successors) in Europe, America, and other lands. In their work at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City, at Iowa State College in Ames, and at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls, the full-time directors and workers on the Foundation closely cooperate with the local Presbyterian churches. Thus a religious emphasis is provided for the students in each of Iowa's three state-sponsored institutions of higher education.

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