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# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Birth and Adolescence

On the first of September, 1859, two young men raced up a hill to the campus of the Bowen Collegiate Institute in Hopkinton, Iowa, eager for the honor of being the first students of the new institution. Little did it matter to them that the baseboards were not on in the classrooms, that there was no stove, and that the mortar boxes remained in the rooms where the plasterers had barely finished their work. Poorly equipped though it was, the building was considered a great accomplishment in that pioneer village of a few score settlers; it had required the efforts of many and real sacrifice from a few.

Among those who were vitally interested in that opening day of the Bowen Institute were Henry A. Carter, Leroy Jackson, and James Kilpatrick. Leroy Jackson, a Kentuckian, had moved to Delaware County in 1840, purchasing a cabin and "all you can see" from the widow of Thomas Nicholson who had died a year previously. This

was the first cabin erected on the present site of Hopkinton.

In 1841, Jackson persuaded Henry Carter to join him in occupying the beautiful ridge overlooking the Maquoketa River. Carter, of sturdy New England stock, was from Massachusetts. James Kilpatrick, the third man in the educational triumvirate, was a Scotchman and a member of the Church of the Covenanters.

It appears to have been Carter who, in the early 1850's, first gave voice to the desire for a college in Hopkinton. An elementary school had been established in 1849 and by 1855 it was housed in the first brick school building in Delaware County. The Presbyterian and Covenanter churches were taking shape; it was time to think about a college.

So, following a call from Carter, the citizens of Hopkinton "met in conformity to a public notice to take into consideration the propriety of establishing a Collegiate Institute at Hopkinton, Delaware County, Iowa." The exact date of this meeting was not recorded, but an adjourned meeting was held on September 6, 1855, and an organization committee was appointed. The following spring a committee was chosen to draft a plan for a building and to contract for one hundred thousand bricks.

Soon after this meeting Chauncey T. Bowen

from Chicago came to visit his brother, Asa C. Bowen, in Hopkinton. Half in jest, he said he would contribute \$500 to the new college if he could name it. That amount of money was no joke to the promoters and his offer was promptly accepted. On June 22, 1856, he paid the money and on August 22nd a constitution was adopted naming the future institution "Bowen Collegiate Institute".

The organization was completed in September, 1856, with the election of the first board of trustees. Articles of incorporation, filed on October 3, 1856, authorized the existence of the corporation for twenty years with a capital of \$100,000.

Even as the institute was being incorporated and the stock was offered for sale, James Kilpatrick was burning the brick for the building in his kiln south of Hopkinton, and other supplies were being hauled by wagon from Dubuque, some forty miles distant. The walls and roof of the building were constructed in 1857, but this depleted the treasury to such an extent that Jackson, Carter, and Kilpatrick signed a note for \$900, which they eventually had to make good.

The skeleton building stood untouched throughout the winter of 1857, for there were no funds in the treasury and little market for the stock. The project was branded a failure by many of the

early enthusiasts, but Carter, Jackson, and Kilpatrick were not wheat planted on stony ground; they refused to wither away or admit defeat. Both Carter and Jackson had established sawmills in 1844 and both had plenty of seasoned lumber. This they donated. Carter, who once had owned much of the town site, still possessed many lots, some of which he traded to workmen for their labor.

The building was a two-story brick structure, 40 x 60 feet in size, with four rooms on the first floor and a chapel, two recitation rooms, and a music room on the second floor. The *Dubuque Weekly Times* for January 13, 1859, had this account of the building: "A large brick edifice is enclosed, and will be finished and ready for use early in the spring. It is located on an eminence, and has a very commanding appearance in this young country. It will cost about ten thousand dollars. It is one of the best buildings of its kind in the interior of the State." Money, however, was still needed and a festival was held some time in the spring of 1859, netting \$70 for the purchase of glass and nails. On the Fourth of July, 1859, a ball, which drew "young people from all directions", added \$150.

Dr. W. L. Roberts, pastor of the Covenant Church, was selected as the first president and

about sixty students enrolled for the first classes when the Bowen Collegiate Institute opened on September 1, 1859. The staff included the Reverend Jerome Allen, A. M., late of Dubuque, who taught "Classical Literature and Natural Science", Orman E. Taylor, "Professor of Mathematics", Miss Lucy A. Cooley, the "Preceptress", and Justus C. Houser, who taught German. The *Dubuque Weekly Times* had this comment on the local setting: "Hopkinton is a lovely, healthy and quiet place — just such a sylvan retreat as students would be likely to seek."

As was customary for secondary schools and colleges, the school year was divided into three terms of three months each. During the first term, in the autumn of 1859, a total of sixty-four students enrolled. This was increased to ninety-seven during the winter term. When the weather turned cold the teachers and students joined their resources to provide stoves and fuel. The second term opened on December 12, 1859. About this time Dr. Roberts resigned from the presidency of the infant school and the Reverend Jerome Allen was elected by the trustees to fill the position.

In 1860, the officers of the college, through President Allen, asked the Old School Presbyterian Synod of Iowa to appoint a committee to confer with them concerning the possibility that

the Synod would take the oversight and control of the institution. In 1861, the Synod accepted the offer and expressed its willingness to undertake the supervision of the institution, but it coupled with this acceptance a warning that no financial assistance could be promised.

About this time there was a serious division of opinion among the supporters of the college. Some contended that President Allen was running a sectarian school, backed by the prestige of the Bowen Collegiate Institute. There were also personal charges against President Allen and other points of dispute. The matter came to a crisis in the election of trustees in 1862. When Henry A. Carter, president of the board and a supporter of President Allen, found that he and his followers were outnumbered by those who sought to oust Allen, he and his supporters, along with Leroy Jackson, the treasurer, left the meeting, taking the records with them.

The opposition then went ahead with the election of trustees. They included Jackson and Carter on the list, but they proceeded to hire replacements for President Allen and for Orman E. Taylor. When the new treasurer-elect asked Leroy Jackson for the account books, that hardy frontiersman refused to surrender them, saying he had bought them with his own money and he did

not intend to give them up. Shortly after the disputed election, according to an early record, Carter "brought suit against the college corporation on his liens, to which Jackson, in behalf of that body, confessed judgment, without mentioning the matter to the other trustees, thus placing the ownership of the property in Mr. Carter's hand. This rendered nugatory the result of the election."

Legal action was threatened but the dispute did not reach the courts and the 1862 fall term opened with President Allen and Mr. Taylor at their usual places and by September 12th, a committee was able to report to the Synod that the college had prospered in spite of some enemies, and that the Synod's proposal to supervise the school had been accepted by the stockholders. It was also reported that at the next meeting of the Synod "a deed of the property freed of encumbrance would be offered, provided that body would assume control, and would also constitute Messrs. Carter, Jackson, and Kilpatrick trustees for life." This deed, signed on February 9, 1864, by Henry A. and Mary Carter, transferred the property to the Synod. Later it was agreed that if the college ever ceased to operate, the property would revert to the town of Hopkinton for educational purposes.



As evidence of the expanding interests of the students at the Bowen Collegiate Institute five young men met in the northwest recitation room on October 24, 1862, and signed a document which began, "We, the undersigned, students of Bowen Collegiate Institute, in order to promote friendship and to improve ourselves in literature, do make and ordain the following constitution." Thus was born the Athenian Literary Society.

Four months after the organization of the Athenians, the following statement is found in the minutes: "On motion, S. Calvin was admitted into this society by paying 25 cts. with the understanding that he may hereafter become a full member by paying the remaining 25 cts." The S. Calvin referred to was Dr. Samuel Calvin, later a professor at the Bowen Institute and for many years a professor at the State University of Iowa and one of Iowa's greatest scientists.

Reverend Allen resigned in March, 1862, and the fall term brought a new president to the Bowen Institute, the Reverend James McKean, a young Presbyterian minister.

While Bowen Collegiate Institute was co-educational, there were, it appears, limits beyond which a girl did not go. She was not supposed to participate in the forensic training. During the year 1861-1862 a co-ed named Mary E. Walker

conspired with the boys to join the debating society. She was suspended and all but two of the young men left with her. Later they surrendered and returned, but Mary remained outside the circle of learning.

The Civil War did not leave the school untouched. As early as 1861 the *Dubuque Times* reported that some forty students had gone to war from the Bowen Institute. Finally, in May, 1864, a recruiting officer came to the college chapel and made a stirring appeal for men to join in the "hundred days" enlistment. When he had finished, all but one or two of the men signified their willingness to volunteer and President McKean put his name at the top of the muster roll as their captain. Little did they know that gallant President McKean was destined not to live even the "hundred days" but would fall a victim to fever before drawing his sword. In all, nearly one hundred students of the college served in the Union army and twenty-seven lost their lives.

During the summer of 1864, steps were taken by the trustees to fill the vacancies which resulted from the enlistments. The Reverend James D. Mason, one of the first members of the board of trustees chosen by the Synod, was elected president, his pay to be "receipts from tuition". He was active only until the end of the fall term, al-

though his resignation was not received until October, 1865. In the meantime, the Reverend Jerome Allen again took charge of the administration of the school. The attendance for the year 1864-1865 was exceedingly good, despite the war and the change of administrations. Some 207 students were enrolled during the year. This ranks as one of the largest attendances in the school's history.

In the fall of 1864, the Presbyterian Synod, wishing to recognize a gift of \$1,000 from James Lenox of New York, and seemingly disregarding the earlier bargain with Bowen for \$500, changed the name of the institution from the Bowen Collegiate Institute to Lenox Collegiate Institute.

When the Civil War ended in April, 1865, the citizens resolved to commemorate those who had given their lives in the struggle and on November 17th, with many soldiers not yet home, Hopkinton and Lenox were ready to dedicate one of the earliest monuments to Civil War heroes. The day of dedication was a grand one for the Lenox Collegiate Institute, Hopkinton, and the community, although touched with the sadness of missing brothers and sons.

The *Dubuque Times* said of the occasion: "The monument is a handsome marble shaft, resting on a very solid foundation of limestone, and

capped by a beautiful 'capital', representing the flag and arms of our country . . . . A bountiful dinner was provided in the college building, and great pains taken to welcome and render comfortable the considerable number of persons present from distant towns". Major General William Vandever of Dubuque was the chief speaker. This celebration is the basis for Hopkinton's claim to be the first community to celebrate Memorial Day, which was nationally established in 1868.

In 1865, Reverend Samuel Hodge came to the Lenox Collegiate Institute as professor of languages. He was a man of excellent training and experience both for the ministry and for the classroom. The following year he was elected president of Lenox and began a very successful administration of seventeen years. It was under his guiding hand that Lenox was to grow strong, and find its place of service as a small Christian college.

WILLIAM R. FERGUSON