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BRIEF SKETCHES OF THE EARLY HISTORY
OF LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY

by

WILLIAM H. SAMPSON

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Brief Sketch of the early history of Lawrence University by W. H. Phelps

Born as was methodism in a University it is ^{no} marvel
that her sons should be ⁱⁿ ambitious to maintain her worthy ori-
gin and labor to exalt her everywhere to a noble destiny in all
departments of letters and the sciences. It is gratifying to know
that in the march of our western civilization her children have
kept pace with the demand to furnish educational facilities
for the population. It is difficult to estimate the
importance of this work in a republic like
ours where the sovereignty is vested in the people, and
the perpetuity of our civil and religious institu-
tions, depends on virtue and intelligence. Neither
is it a trifle to determine where the location of
our literary and scientific foundations will be the
most servicable to the public in the settlement of
a new country. There are always enough to enlighten
our Providence in the matter and sometimes these self-
ish purposes are overruled by one whose omniscience sees
and the future and plans in spite of human frailty. For per-

eral years before a providential opening seemed to occur for commencing such an enterprise in Wisconsin under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church, there was a prayerful anxiety on this subject; several of us had talked the matter over, but could fix on no definite plan or location. We concluded that a college for both male and female students, where each and all should be entitled to equal educational advantages ^{was a desideratum.} Wisconsin was included in the Rock River Territory formed in 1844 when I was appointed to the Green Bay Dist. which extended from Whitewater to Green Bay, and from Shubogon to Portage City. About this time the necessity of forming a Wisconsin Conf. began to be discussed and more particular interest was felt by those designing to remain therein in reference to its educational facilities. In the Spring of 1846, I received the following communication from H. Eugene Eastman Esq. of N. York.

Edw^d W^m Sampson Dear Sir I am in receipt of a letter from a gentleman in Boston, whose name I am not at liberty to disclose, containing the following prop-

position, which I take the liberty of tendering to you, to
be submitted to your annual Conf. Should you see
fit to do so, "If there is any certainty of a vigorous
co-operation of any other body Lay or Clerical I should
be willing to put such a sum of money in the hands of trust-
ees as placed at interest will in ten years amount to \$10,000.
and also give (provided there should be no failure in case of my
death) the sum of one thousand dollars yearly for ten
years toward securing a competent salary to such instructors
as may be required, or if necessary, I will pay the \$10,000. in
cash now to secure the desired object. But all this is found-
ed on the expectation of a similar sum from other quarters.

I should have a high opinion of the adaptation of the prin-
ciples of the Methodists to the people of the west, and I think
from all that I can learn, that their institutions are
carried on with more vigor, and diffuse more good with
the same means than any others. It seems to be de-
cided by experience that all literary institutions must
be controlled by some sect, and efforts to prevent this have

often blasted their usefulness, I wish you to keep this to your-
self as far as possible, and at any rate keep my name out
of view." This proposition it is proper to add is for the estab-
lishing an institution of learning at or near Depue, Brown
county, which appears to be a sine qua non with this gentleman
who makes it. Please take the trouble to present the above
to your conference. If there is any reasonable prospect of the
society meeting the same with a similar endowment, inform
me of the disposition as soon as possible; mean time, I should
be glad to hear your views on the subject. Should you
write soon, you will please address to Boston Mass.

Green Bay April 17th 1846.

W. Eugene Eastman

This communication turned our attention to a location
not thought of before. I took this letter to our next confer-
ence at Peoria Ill. It was given to the Committee on Education
and their report recommended that the letter be returned to me
with instructions to get the gentlemen's name making the
proposition and open a correspondence to ascertain what
could be done. Before I secured the name from Mr.

Eastman, or a permit to open a correspondence, Mr. Reed Smith then agent for Albion, Sen. Mich. applied to Mr. A. W. Lawrence in Boston for help in that institution. Mr. Lawrence declined he told on the ground that he considered the people in Mich. able to build their own institutions. He informed Mr. Smith of his proposition to start an institution in Wis. and it seems Mr. S. was for some reason anxious to get away from Mich. and secured the charge of Mr. Lawrence's proposition made in the foregoing letter to Mr. Eastman and came to Wis. in Nov. or Dec. following. Dec. 28th 1846 a convention of ministers and laymen gathered in Milwaukee, where the proposition of Mr. Lawrence was presented, and after some discussion, a charter was drafted for the Lawrence Institute of Wisconsin and a committee appointed to proceed to Madison, the Legislature being in session, and secure the passage of the Charter. My family resided at Fond du Lac, and after returning there, I had to attend a quarterly meeting at Lake Maria hence I did not reach Madison

till the following week. Mr. Smith had procured me
and got the Charter before the house, and when I arrived
they told me they designed to kill the bill when it came
up again. Having friends in both branches I secured
an interest favor of the bill and it finally passed
and was signed by Gov. Dodge Jan 17th 1847. The
next thing was to secure a suitable location. There were
several who were ~~a few~~ dollars anxious to direct Proc.
in this work. Mr. Smith purchased a tract of
land ostensibly for Mr. Lawrence from Hon. John F. Mer-
ade where Appleton now stands. In the contract Mr.
Smith secured a donation of thirty one acres on
condition the Institute should be located at the place
and George W. Law Esq proposed to donate thirty ~~one~~
acres more. There were propositions from others;
but the Board of Trustees decided in favor of the
present location. Mr. Smith could not persuade
Mr. Law to give his donation to Mr. Law-
rence though he tried hard to do so; but he succeeded

in getting Mr. Meade to deed his donation to
Mr. Lawrence by pretending that ~~he~~ designed the
whole purchase for the Institute, as Mr. Meade
informed me. Mr. Lawrence told me that Mr. S.
received pay for the whole amount deeded and when
I informed ^{him} of the facts in the case in 1852. he said
at once that the thirty one acres belonged to the
College and that ^{the Court} ~~the~~ Court of Chancery would so de-
cide, and he would deed certain lots and blocks
in Appleton to the University as a compensation
but when I next met him, he told me that Smith
had found out his intention and before he could
make out the papers, had served an injunction
on him, on the ground that he, Smith, had a contract
to sell the property on shares. So we were swindled
out of Mr. Meade's donation. Had the Board of Trustees
possessed the attribute of prescience the result might
have been avoided or had those who tried to get hold
of the original contract succeeded, the ^{wrong} error might

have been corrected. The trustees named in the Charter were to meet in Fond du Lac in June, I think 1847, or sometime within the period allowed by the Charter for organizing, but a quorum failing to appear we adjourned to meet in Sept. I think the 5th when a quorum being present a permanent organization was effected by the election of the following officers, to wit: Hon. M. S. Darling, President; Hon. A. F. Fallmidge, 1st Vice Pres; Henry S. Baird Esq. 2nd Vice Pres; Hon. Morgan C. Martin, Treasurer; and Wm. N. Sampson Secretary. During the year many letters were written and the necessary amount of gassing was done east and west in order to bring "such a noble and benevolent enterprise" into notoriety, and especially to magnify the disinterestedness of certain individuals, who condescended to attend to the wants of the uneducated and uncivilized west with so much of self-sacrifice. On one occasion I was accompanying one of these "ones" on his Mission of Mercy from Fond du Lac to Green Bay and called to rest and dine at the Brochertown Indian Mission parsonage. A gentleman living near invited us all to dine at his

house. We accepted the cordial invitation and in due time
sat down to a very neatly looking, and bountifully supplied ta-
ble of good wholesome provisions. Soon the conversation of our be-
nevolent guest turned upon the superior living of the east and the hard-
ships of enduring western fare. Rude and uncultivated as we western
missionaries were, we felt greatly mortified that the generosity of our
host and hostess should be so rudely treated. To relieve matters the mis-
sionary said Bro. S. did you ever eat any French soup? I made an
evasive reply, but it excited the curiosity of our guest and he en-
quired ~~inquisitively~~ ^{inquisitively} ~~of~~ French soup, what is that? The brother replied
two onions thrown into a pail of water; then a sort of quaker
meeting ensued. Subscriptions were solicited to meet the
conditions of Mr. Lawrence's donation. Mr. Samuel
Appleton donated \$10,000. for a Library Fund, the interest
only to be used, and among the other principle contribu-
tors were Hon. Mr. L. Martin, Hon. Cha. Durkin, Hon.
Mr. G. Darling, Rev. S. Fiske, & others, and at our first
annual meeting of the Board in Fond du Lac Aug. 9. 1818
we had promises sufficient to consider the enterprise

Secured beyond a doubt. Wm. Sampson was elected principal and was to be the agent till the school opened and Ruder Smith was elected agent assuring the Board that he would have the building ready to open the school during the following Nov. or Dec. My family resided in Fond du Lac, and as there ^{was} no place for them at Grand Chute except the forest, I could not take them to the city till I built a shanty to shelter them. The agent arranged with Col. Henry L. Blood to furnish the bill of timber and draw the lumber to the spot for the Preparatory Building and then started for Boston the only place at that early day worth noticing. I arranged matters at home, packed my trunk, and ^{on the 7th} of Sept. 1848 left for the scene of operations. I took the steamer Manchester, the same they used to draw over the sand bar at Taycheedah with a yoke of stags, arrived at Menasha about noon, secured a passage, alone in an Indian dugout to the Grand Chute and took lodgings in a shanty hotel, about one mile south of west from the present courthouse, kept by Mr. Shurber, the nearest house to the place of business. On the 8th of Sept. I began

to cut away the thick underbrush, and soon had a road cleared
from the old Indian trail on the river bank to the block on
which ^{Block 3. 2. Ward} Mr. Brewster's beautiful residence now stands. I cleared
off the brush, and the necessary preparations were made for
the erection of the building in the center of that block.
Col. Blood soon had a bill of timber as per Agent's order,
cut a road through the dense forest to Duck Creek where the
Agent had engaged the lumber, employed teams and soon
was doing "Land Office" business, a towering pile of lumber was
on the ground. The Agent had let the contract of putting up the
building to Wm. St. McGregor of Shelbygan, and he sent John
F. Parish and Mr. Blake, who came in Oct. or Nov. with their
families, erected shanties and went to work. In consequence
of sickness in my family, I was not able to move into my
shanty till Jan. 7th 1849. The Agent remained east till
the latter part of February, and on his arrival went into
City building, Speculation, double entry Book keeping,
changed the plans for the College building till if I recollect,
Col. Blood furnished three bills of timber, and the frame of

the building was not raised till the third day of July following.
This was a year of new and sad experiences, with us westerners
in school enterprises, principalships, agencies etc, and some
of us became thoroughly disgusted with the whole concern;
but we had enlisted and it was considered cowardly to back
out and impolitic to speak a discouraging word. After the
building was raised, the agent hastened to the seat of the Wis.
Conf. which convened that year at Platteville June 27th to
arrange for a visiting committee, that should meet his ap-
proval, which he secured without opposition. At the An-
nual meeting of the Joint Board, which met Aug. 8th 1848
the President appointed these visitors chairmen
of the principle committees, and before the meeting
closed, ^{the agent} he seemed anxious to be delivered from the tender
mercies of his friends. Against his remonstrances
and in spite of them, ^{Thos. Sampson} was appointed Financial Agent
and reappointed Principal of the Preparatory Depart-
ment of the Lawrence University. The former Agent was
as much disgusted with this arrangement as the newly

as was the newly elected, and ^{one} who heard him say, he declared
he would not rest till he saw the building shored to the
bank and down into the river. It was now die
Sampson or slay the Lion. The visitors from the
Conf. had lost heart on account of the former manage-
ment, the panic spread through the Conf. and from ^{most}
^{in the enterprise} interest seemed to have fled. The ^{former} Agent claimed, he
had kept his books in "Double Entry"; but it was a
new system that no one else could honestly solve ac-
cording ^{to} his wishes. Under these embarrassments
the new appointee entered upon his duties, but found
many true, warm, sympathizing friends ready to
encourage and help to the extent of their ability. Funds
were needed, confidence in the enterprise ^{was shaken}, and difficulties
in every direction stared the Board in the face. To the
Trustees and friends of the enterprise in Appleton, the pres-
ent and future of the Lawrence University were not very
promising at that time. They kept their own secrets
put the best side out and did their best. The building was

enclosed, the plastering, inside wood work, and painting were
so far done, that school opened ^{Apr. 12th 1849;} with, Wm. Sampson
Principal, R. C. Kellogg A. B. Prof. of Languages, James
M. Phinney Prof. of Mathematics, and Miss. Emeline
M. Crooker, Preceptress and Teacher in Mensic. The
accommodations were not the most convenient, nor the
surroundings the most agreeable. None present to-day
woudt envy the places occupied, or the wages paid for
the services rendered; but those teachers were as untiring
and energetic in their work as if millions had been offered
as their reward. The school early gained a reputation
for thoroughness and moral discipline, which was not
surpassed by any school in Wis. if indeed in the west,
and I think it has kept pace with the rising reputa-
tion of other schools to the present time. To pay debts
pay teachers, and make necessary improvements with all
the embarrassments that were thrown around us was no
small task. Having horses to drive, over families and a
share of the students to provide for in a new place where

nearly everything must be imported required labor. Rev. H. R. Colman was Steward, and Col. H. L. Blood was Treasurer, and the demands upon them were heavy; but nobly did they meet them. I spent many sleepless nights in planning to meet the exigencies of the hour. In order to carry forward the work I found it necessary to dispose of my property in the City of Fond du Lac where I owned a dwelling, two Lots and thirty acres of land also one hundred and twenty acres of timber land two miles north on the west side of the Lake, all now worth seventy five to one hundred thousand dollars. As money was close at the time I had to sell at a great sacrifice but I had risked all, ^{reputation} ~~Character~~ and property on the success of the Lawrence University and I saw no other way to pass the crisis upon us at the time.

We pushed forward our improvements as fast as our means would allow till my health began to yield to the pressure and I was obliged to notify the Board

that I should close my service as their agent at
their annual meeting. I gave this notice to the Exec.
Board early in the Spring and we applied our best en-
ergies and skill till the annual meeting which convened
June 6th 1857. During the session Rev. Davis W. Clark
A. M. since Bishop, was elected President; Rev. R. O. Kellogg
A. B. Prof. of Ancient Languages; Miss. E. M. Crooker, Prop-
tress; and Miss. S. Amelia Dayton, Teacher of Modern
Languages. Prof. Phinney declined serving the Board
longer as teacher of Math. and place was left to be filled by
the Exec. Board. Col. Blood was re-elected Treas. and
Rev. David Brooks agent. Bro. Clark declined to
accept the position and Prof. Kellogg was placed in
charge. Prof. J. Brooks taught the Math. Oscar F.
Gana Esq. was elected Prof. of Greek Language and Lit-
erature, but declined to serve. So Prof. Kellogg and
Brooks, and Misses. Crooker and Dayton did the
teaching for the year, and the Catalogue for the year
gave an attendance of ninety eight.

Matters had become badly complicated with Mr. Lawrence by the first Agent's transactions and at the meeting of the Board which convened Jan 2nd 1852 it was deemed necessary to send a Commission to explain, harmonize and settle up these matters. Mr. H. Sampson was deputed and with power of attorney to act for the Board, he went to Boston and amicably adjusted all matters between Mr. L. and the Board so far as Mr. L. himself was concerned.* Mr. Smith stealthily concealed the contract for Mr. Mead's donation from the Board of Trustees, Mr. Mead died soon after giving the deed, and we were consequently never able to recover his donation. The labors and responsibilities of Prof. Kellogg were too severe for his health and he was granted leave of absence at the Annual Meeting, till he should sufficiently recover to return and do his work. Mr. Adin Peck was employed to teach his Class and the supervision of the School was committed temporarily to Prof. Fabry

* Mr. Lawrence has given about \$30,000. in all.

Brooks. Miss Crooker was retained as Preceptor and
teacher of Mendon. The school did not succeed in meet-
ing the expectations of the Executive Board and I was
sent for to return to ~~the~~ my former position. I got a
release from my pastoral charge & returned to the school
and at an extra meeting of the Joint Board which con-
vened Sept. 1st 1852. was reelected Principal. Rev. Edwin
Cook was elected President to take charge soon as
he could make arrangements to come provided he
accepted the situation. Rev. J. S. Prescott was elec-
ted Agent, Col. H. L. Blood Treasurer and they were
authorized to make arrangements, procure materials
and proceed to erect the main College building. Prof.
Brooks took umbrage at my re-election, resigned his
place as prof. of Math. and with his brother Mr.
Adm Brooks started an opposition school which
continued through a part of the second term and ceased
for want of patronage. The 3rd Catalogue numbers
eighty four students. President Cook arrived in

early summer and assisted at the close of the term.

Prof. Kellogg's health had recovered so that he returned to his place when Prof. Brooks left and in spite of opposition we closed the year with increasing encouragement. The Annual meeting of the joint Board convened June 29th 1853. Pres. Cooke gave his inaugural and was duly installed as the first President of the Faculty in the Lawrence University. The Corner Stone of our College building was laid by Dr. M. C. Darling Pres. of the Board of Trustees, and an able address was delivered on the occasion by Rev. Alfred Bruson A. M. The Faculty for this year was organized as follows: Rev. Edward Cooke A. M. Pres.; Rev. B. O. Kellogg, A. M. Prof. of Ancient Languages and Literature; Rev. W. H. Sampson Teacher in Math. and Eng.; Miss S. Amelia Dayton Preceptress and Teacher of Modern Languages; Miss Jane J. Adams Teacher in Music; Miss Lucyle Weston Teacher in Primary department. Rev. J. S. Pres.

Cott, Agent. Col. Blood, Resident Agent and Treasurer.
Rev. Henry Regua Agent for Ind. Dept. Confidence
in the financial management of the enterprise was meas-
urably restored, though all efforts to settle with the
first agent had entirely failed. There was more or
less discussion in every session of the Board on the
subject of "Double Entry," and frequently luminous discov-
eries were made. Work progressed on the college
building but the means for its completion came
in slowly. Mr. Saml. Appleton of Boston, after
whom the City was named, transferred \$10,000. in
stocks to the University, the principal to be held
inviolate, the income to be invested in a Library
and the scholarships which were sold were being
paid up the principal of which was to form an
endowment fund, the interest to be paid to the faculty.

As was very natural Pres. Coker was in a great
hurry to have the new building completed and in
spite of remonstrances, he secured ^{the consent of} a majority of

The Board present to an appropriation of some \$15,000. of the Scholarship fund to finish off the main building and this amount has never yet been replaced. The fact got out and I think it was very prejudicial to the Scholarship fund which I think to a great extent, otherwise might have been collected. The fourth Catalogue showed an attendance during the year of one hundred and ninety six students. The attendance was so full that some one started a scheme to continue building and add two dormitory buildings, each one hundred and twenty feet by forty on the ground and three stories high. The Exec. Board passed resolutions to do this; but the funds were not furnished and though the resolutions stand firm on the records to-day, the dormitories remain unbuilt. At the annual meeting in 1854 the Board of trustees elected a Faculty to meet the wants of college classes and the catalogue for that year gives the names

of twenty eight Freshmen and four Sophomores,
and an attendance in both college and preparatory
departments during the year of 333. The Lawrence
University was started on the plan of the co. educa-
tion of the sexes, giving to each student the oppor-
tunity of competing for any honor conferred by the
University and of enjoying that honor when justly
earned. Dr. Cooke deemed to think the dignity
of a College Faculty was somewhat compromised
by giving the Ladies a place on the same page
with the gentlemen and practically the original
design was not carried out by him except in the
class recitations. There was a male and female
department for the Faculty, for the College and
for the Preparatory Students in the Catalogue
and in the Commencement exercises. Dr. Mason
followed the precedent set by his illustrious prede-
cessor and not till 1865 when Dr. Steet assumed the
duties of President did we have a man of suffi-

cient progress and courage to carry out the original designs of the founders of the Lawrence University.

The first Catalogue published by Dr. Pres. Stute gives the Faculty on the same page, the male and female graduates are published together; but the undergraduates are separated though he has the courage to give them their proper class cognomens, Freshmen, Sophomores instead of First, Second &c years for the Ladies. To keep the peace, I suppose, he gave Valedictory addresses to male and female. But the second year he had received his D. D. and he gave the Latin Salutatory to Phoebe G. Bullock, the first time we have full evidence of equal opportunity to compete for college honors by Ladies and gentlemen in Law. Uni. Since then he is entirely ruined in the estimation of otologists. Those who wish to learn the changes in the faculty and officers of the University in 1857 and subsequently are referred to the published catalogues for the several years. The Literary Societies remove

* It is due to Gov. Willard to say that his financial in the erection of our College building is worthy of all praise. The expense of its erection structure was less than \$30,000.

ed from their inconvenient quarters in the Preparatory building to their present pleasant rooms in the College where many have spent profitable hours in the arena of mental of mental competition. The four succeeding years were years of prosperity so far as numbers of students in attendance, and mental culture were concerned; but the finances fell behind and in spite of all the Board could do the expenses of the school exceeded the income; hence funds were necessarily used from the capital that should have been kept sacred and only the interest of it used. At the annual meeting of the Board in 1855, the \$15,000. used from the scholarship fund was secured by mortgage on the College building, and so far as I am informed there has never been any foreclosure*. On the night of the first Sabbath in January 1857, the Preparatory building which at that time was occupied by lady students, was consumed by fire by which the ladies have been greatly inconvenienced ever since. It is due to the ladies that a commodious

ous and convenient building should be speedily erected
for their occupancy. July 1.st 1857 the first gradua-
ting class, seven in number, received their diplomas from
President Cooke, and went ^{out} to battle for the right. At the
annual meeting of the Board in 1858 I resigned my
position as Adjunct Prof. of Math. and my labors
closed as an instructor in Lawrence University. I
trust you will pardon any appearance of egotism
in these imperfect sketches as my life was identi-
fied with all the interests of our University, its
prosperity and adversity, its triumphs and its fail-
ures from its incipency to the time I left. The 30.th
of June 1858 was eventful day in the history of Law-
rence University, as the Board by a majority of those
present voted to give its first agent \$7,300. credit
on its records to get rid of him and close up all
relations with him. It may have been an express-
ion of gratitude on the part of those who voted for
it for the services he rendered to the benighted west.

on the subject of "Bookkeeping by Double entry."

Though my efforts may have been feeble, and my sacrifices small, I have the conscious satisfaction of knowing that I gave most conscientiously and honestly the best years of my life, and made my small sacrifices when they were most needed, and their application would tell to the best advantage.

Before I close allow me to record my high appreciation of the patient and enduring toils, and repeated sacrifices of the friends of our University during these infantile years of its history.