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The Joint Archives *Quarterly*

A Step Forward for Hope College: Building Graves Hall and Winants Chapel

by Elton J. Bruins

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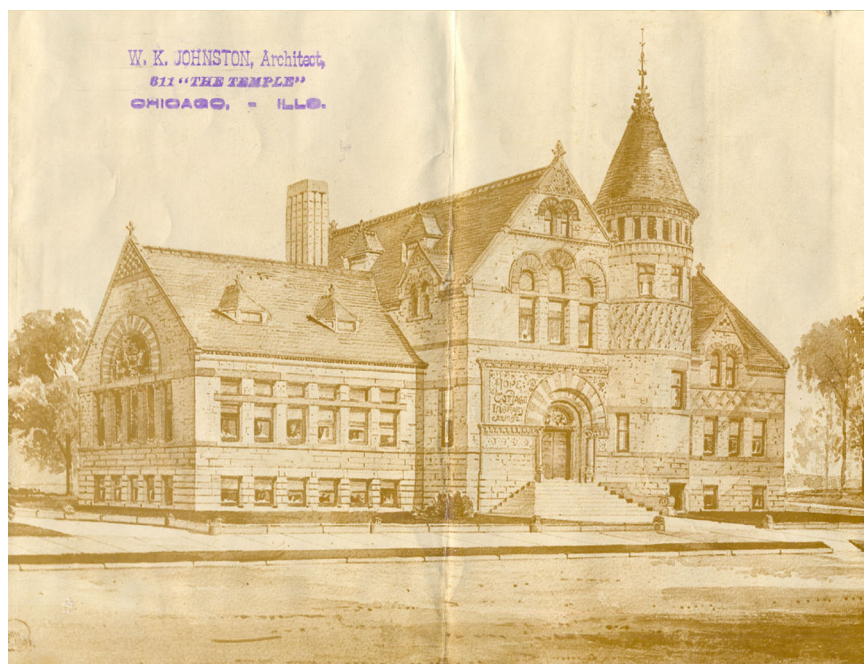
A new chapter in the history and life of Hope College began with the dedication of Graves Hall and Winants Chapel on Tuesday, 26 June 1894.¹ After more than a quarter of a century struggle to develop a sound educational program and to overcome indebtedness, the college was able to build a fine structure to house its library and chapel. Up until this time, the library did not have a permanent home, and the chapel had to share its home with athletic activities. The new facility housed the president's office as well—a very fitting change of location as the new president, Gerrit J. Kollen, who was inaugurated as president the day after the dedication of Graves/Winants, had been given the task by his predecessor to raise the money for this building.

In order to understand why the addition of this structure signaled a big step forward for the college, it will be helpful to briefly review the years prior to the construction of Graves/Winants. A key person in the history of Hope College, Rev.

Philip Phelps Jr., arrived in Holland with his family in 1859 to become the fourth principal of the Holland Academy. Initially he taught all courses offered, in addition to being principal and serving as minister for the English-speaking community.²

In the fall of 1862, he inaugurated collegiate courses, which meant the graduates of the Holland Academy could stay on campus to continue their studies rather than travel to Rutgers College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, a college that was founded by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1766. Phelps soon had to add additional staff due to the rising enrollment. When the Reformed Church in America in 1863 approved collegiate education at the Holland Academy,

Phelps was charged by the General Synod to raise endowment funds for the college. The first class of eight college students graduated in 1866.³ The college was also incorporated that year, and Phelps was inaugurated as its first president 12 July 1866. Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte was the founder of



*W. K. Johnston's c.1892 drawing of Graves Hall/Winants Chapel
recovered from original cornerstone in 2006*

From the Director



The article in this issue of the *Joint Archives Quarterly* begins what could become a series due to the number of historic buildings on the Hope College campus which the college has retained, renovated and preserved. Last spring, college officials decided to open the original cornerstone of Graves Hall in an attempt to locate the original plans for the 1892 Graves Hall/Winants Chapel

construction. Dr. Elton Bruins, longtime Hope College professor/administrator/archivist/historian, had the pleasure of removing the copper box from the long-sealed cornerstone.

While Bruins was as disappointed as the contractors at the absence of the plans, mentioned in historical references to the building, it brought to light just how important archival records of an institution, like Hope College, are to future generations of historians and construction crews as they seek to write histories and renovate buildings. Both are important activities as Hope College approaches its 150th anniversary.



Graves Hall/Winants Chapel has been a centerpiece for the college since 1892 and promises to retain that position with its upcoming renovation starting in May 2007, even without the original plans. Bruins, who is a member of the committee to plan and renovate the building, was kind enough to share his skills at diligent research, careful analysis, and readable writing style in this article about the building. After reading it, I hope that you spend a little time in and around the building contemplating its Waverly stone façade, solid architectural style, and importance to the Holland community as a whole.

Geoffrey D. Reynolds

A Step Forward for Hope College (continued from page 1)

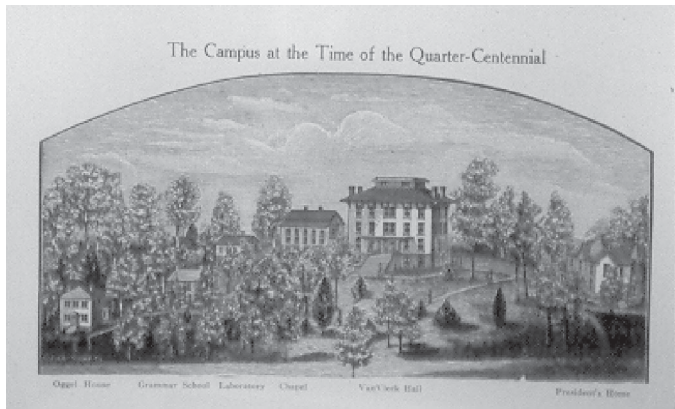
the Holland Colony, and because of his prominence in the community, came to be regarded as the founder of the college.⁴ However, with all of the efforts that he exerted and

the leading role that he played to establish this institution, Phelps should be credited with the founding of Hope College.

Phelps had a great vision for the infant college. He was able, with the support of Van Raalte, pastor of Pillar Church, to inaugurate theological education at Hope College. As a result, seven of its first eight graduates prepared for the ministry in Holland rather than going to New Brunswick to attend the Reformed Church seminary there. Shortly after becoming president of the college in 1866, he envisioned developing the college into a university. He even persuaded the General Synod of the Reformed Church to change the name of the college to Hope Haven University. Phelps wanted to add schools of law and medicine as well as theology to the curriculum, but his hope of escalating the college's academic program to graduate level education ran afoul of achievement for two reasons. First, the three faculty members, Professors Charles Scott, T. Romeyn Beck, and Cornelius Crispell, felt that Phelps was trying to do too much too soon. This difference of opinion caused conflict when the college could ill-afford controversy. The college was in arrears for faculty salaries, and secondly, the depression of 1873 adversely affected the college's fundraising efforts creating an even deeper debt.

Phelps's vision exceeded his grasp. The controversy over making Hope into a university and its rising indebtedness caused the board to ask for his resignation in 1878. His career as president ended—a sad day for Hope College as he was its visionary founder. A mild-mannered, unassuming person, who worked well with and became a close friend of Van Raalte, Phelps tended to be overshadowed by the dynamic, authoritarian Dr. Van Raalte.⁵ Nevertheless, it was Phelps who shaped the academic program and spirit of Hope College, which is present even now. Phelps was responsible for what Hope College is today—an academic institution of quality.

An interim president was chosen to succeed Phelps,⁶ Rev. Giles Mandeville, a Reformed Church pastor in New York City. He did not move to Holland to serve as the actual president. His task was to raise money in the East to get Hope on a good financial footing. Prof. Charles Scott was placed in charge of the day-to-day running of the college. Scott succeeded Mandeville as interim president in 1880 and was finally installed as president in 1885. Mandeville and Scott deserve the credit for raising the funds to pay off the debts that were strangling the college in the 1870s. President Scott was able to stabilize the college's financial basis, but by 1893 he was worn out and ill. He was able to attend the cornerstone laying ceremonies for Graves/Winants in 1892 but was deceased by the time of its dedication in June 1894.⁷



Artist's impression of Hope College campus, c.1891

A new library and chapel were much needed. Until this time, Van Vleck Hall was the only major building on the campus—a campus that consisted of sixteen acres, all of which had been donated by the Van Raalte family. Clustered near Van Vleck was a group of frame buildings, utilitarian in nature but quite nondescript.⁸ A home on the site, where Lubbers Hall now is located, was used for women's education after that got underway in the 1870s. The chapel/gymnasium, built in 1862 just to the east of Van Vleck Hall, did double duty as a place of worship and physical education. Phelps and the academy students constructed that building in 1862.⁹ In another building, the Holland Academy, then called the Grammar School, held its classes. A simple wooden building nearby served as the laboratory for the little science that was then taught. Another building in close proximity called Charter Hall housed classrooms and apartments for faculty. Van Vleck Hall was the only substantial brick building. Although the campus consisted of sixteen acres, some of it was undeveloped.

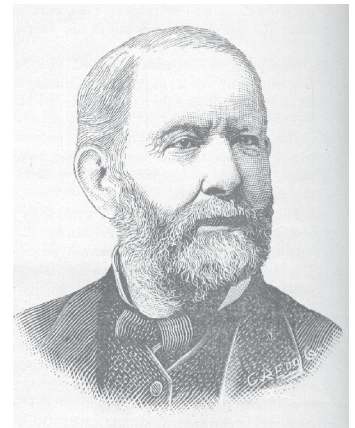
From 1862 when college classes began to be held until the building of Graves/Winants, the college library was somewhat of an orphan. According to Wynand Wichers's history of Hope, written for the centennial celebration of the college in 1966, Phelps "developed the nucleus of a library" in one room in Van Vleck Hall.¹⁰ James Schieffelin, a New York businessman, who with his brother Samuel were generous donors to Hope in the early years, was credited with providing money for that nucleus of books.¹¹ The library collection was moved to the second floor of the Grammar School in 1871.¹² It was located there until 1878 when it was shifted back to Van Vleck Hall and situated in two rooms there. With no duly appointed librarian of faculty status, students such as Josias Meulendyke¹³ were responsible for caring for the collection. By the early 1890s, the collection had grown to six thousand volumes, and it became imperative that the college construct a library building.¹⁴ When the library collection moved into its new quarters in 1894, the college

finally appointed a full-time librarian, Cornelius Doesburg, a recently retired professor of modern languages.

The future of Hope College was in peril at the time of the death of President Scott in 1893. He had solved the financial problems, but there was no money for any kind of expansion of the college facilities. The college campus was in a pathetic state, consisting of Van Vleck Hall, its only substantial building, plus a series of wooden frame buildings in the center of the campus. The college needed a capable fundraiser to serve as its third president and found this person in one of its own professors, Gerrit J. Kollen. He proved to be the leader the college needed.

Gerrit Kollen was a Dutch immigrant, son of a widow, and raised on a farm. Over time, he developed into a cultured gentleman with the appearance of a patrician. After graduating from Hope in 1868, he became a schoolteacher in the village of Overisel near where his widowed mother and siblings farmed. When he joined the college faculty as a math teacher in 1871, he had no advanced degree beyond his Bachelor of Arts degree. He married a daughter of Albertus and Christina Van Raalte, which may have helped his career.¹⁵

Happily, Gerrit Kollen had already demonstrated considerable leadership abilities in fundraising before he became president. When President Scott saw the need for a new library,¹⁶ Kollen was given a leave of absence and assigned the task to raise the money for it. He had little success in the Middle West so he, as Phelps and Scott had done before him, went East where there were many substantial Dutch Reformed churches and numerous generous individuals.¹⁷ Kollen went to two Reformed Church in America families in particular. One was the Nathan N. Graves family who lived in Syracuse, New



Nathan F. Graves

York, and the other was the widow of Garrett Winants and her family, formerly of New York City and currently living in Bergen Point in northern New Jersey. Both Nathan Graves and Garrett Winants had served as elders in their respective Reformed churches, and both were entrepreneurial businessmen who had become wealthy. Graves was a lawyer and made his money in banking; Winants made his fortune in shipping.¹⁸ Along with contributions from a generous lady, Aleida Van Schaick, ninety-seven and a half per cent of the



Garrett E. Winants

funds raised to build the new library and chapel¹⁹ came from eastern Dutch Reformed friends such as these three families. The cost of the new building was about \$40,000.²⁰ In addition to giving generously to the cost of the project, the Graves family gave as many as five thousand²¹ volumes from his personal library of ten thousand volumes to the college. A special gift of

the Graves family was a volume of Audubon bird prints, which is now on display in the lower level of the Van Wylen Library.²²

The location of Graves/Winants is of interest as well. Originally the City of Holland wanted to extend 11th Street through the campus from College to Columbia Avenues.²³ If the city prevailed, Van Vleck Hall and the President’s Home would have been on the north side of that street. The site for the new building on College Avenue at one end of the proposed extension of 11th Street thwarted the city’s effort.²⁴

The college hired a local contractor, James Huntley, to build Graves/Winants.²⁵ John Van Landegend, a local hardware dealer, was awarded the plumbing contract. The architect, W. K. Johnston²⁶ of Chicago, borrowed considerably from the design work of a leading Boston architect, Henry Hobson Richardson.²⁷ Graves/Winants echoes many eastern buildings that are Romanesque and designed by Richardson. His most famous building is Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston. Richardson’s firm is still in existence today and is known as Shepley Bullfinch Richardson and Abbott. It also designed for Hope College the Gordon J. and Margaret D. Van Wylen Library, which was dedicated in 1988.²⁸

Neither Nathan Graves nor Garrett Winants were present for the dedication of the new library and chapel in 1894. Graves spoke at the groundbreaking in 1892 but was too ill in 1894 to make the trip back to Holland. Winants was already deceased by 1890, but members of his family were not present either. Faculty and students were grateful for the generosity of the Graves and Winant families and others who provided monies to build a suitable home for the library and a new place of worship. The old chapel/gymnasium was remodeled to serve solely as a gym until 1906 when the new Carnegie Gymnasium opened.²⁹

Through the years this architecturally distinctive building, Graves/Winants, has undergone a number of changes and renovations, the majority to the interior fortunately. The first major change came after the Memorial Chapel was dedicated in 1929, and Winants Chapel no longer had to serve as the college chapel. It could well have served as an auditorium for general use, of course, but the library needed more room and expanded into the space once occupied by Winants chapel. The change came during the first year of the presidency of Dr. Wynand Wichers (1931-1945). According to the 1931-32 annual report of the librarian, Agnes N. Tysee, “The changes in the library arrangement and quarters this year have been a decided improvement. The larger reading room seats comfortably a hundred students at one time.”³⁰



Winants Chapel, c.1900

Graves/Winants may have been the first college building I entered when I enrolled as a freshman in 1946. On that rainy registration day in September 1946, freshmen were lined up outside for a considerable distance, waiting to get into Graves/Winants to see our academic advisers and to register for classes. The college doubled in size that fall with the enrollment of over six hundred freshmen, many of whom, like me, had just left the military. I remember clearly from those days the circular iron staircase in Graves Library that went down to the stacks on the lower level, the only way to access them.³¹

The next major change in Graves/Winants occurred in 1962. After the new Van Zoeren Library on Graves Place opened, Graves/Winants was available for conversion to other uses.³² Winants Auditorium was restored close to its original look. The Presidents’ Room was constructed in a former study alcove—a project funded by the gift of the Dykhuizen family. This lovely room safely housed the portraits of the college presidents and still does today. Winants Auditorium was used

for such things as faculty meetings and concerts.³³ On the second floor, faculty offices, classrooms for language instruction, and a new language laboratory gave new life to the instruction of languages at Hope. The lower level was greatly changed with the addition of organ practice rooms, offices for student organizations, and the Schoon Memorial Chapel.³⁴

In 1980 another renovation of the building in the Winants Auditorium area took place, apparently motivated by the Student Congress.³⁵ Students contributed \$15,000 toward the total cost of \$50,000. Winants Auditorium was changed completely—not to the enhancement of its architectural beauty. The large semi-circular stained glass lunettes above the main windows on the west and east sides, installed in 1893-94, were discarded. The windows had greatly deteriorated, and it was thought to be too costly to restore them. So they were demolished for practical reasons. Dr. Jack Wilson, art historian, and I attempted to prevent the removal and destruction of the stained glass windows but to no avail. The lunettes were broken up and placed in large barrels from which I rescued a lovely remnant of leaded glass.³⁶ Instead of replacing the glass in these windows, the space was boarded up so that the room could be darkened for using visual aids in classes and for showing movies Friday and Saturday nights for the student community. The seating was changed: the rows of seats were set diagonally. A large screen and a chalk board were placed in the southwest corner. A booth was constructed behind the north wall on the eastern end to house the visual aid and sound equipment. The room, seating up to two hundred persons, could then be used for public programs or for large classes. However, the only architecturally beautiful features remaining in the room were the beams of the cathedral ceiling and some of the original wall paneling.

Only one change has been made to the exterior of Graves/Winants. After Van Raalte Hall was destroyed by fire a few months after the 1980 renovation of Winants Auditorium, the college decided to re-use some of the Waverly stone that had formed the former southern entrance of Van Raalte Hall to construct the new and attractive entrance on the east side of Graves Hall. Since the stone of Van Raalte Hall and the stone of Graves/Winants came from the same local stone quarry, this new entrance matched the beauty of the exterior of the building nicely. In fact, without knowing that this entrance was constructed in 1980, it would appear to be original to the building of 1894.

Just a word about Waverly stone. An abundance of this stone was discovered in the late 19th century in a quarry located just east of Holland and was extensively used in the Holland area prior to the invention of cement block. Several

buildings on Eighth Street were constructed of Waverly stone. The stone was similar to stone found in Ohio where it was given the name Waverly. Since the architectural style created by Richardson lent itself to the use of this stone, it was used in the construction of the exterior of Graves Library and Winants Chapel. Graves/Winants is a prominent, probably the most prominent, example of the use of Waverly stone in the Holland area.³⁷

After the completion of several current building projects on campus—the Martha Miller Center for Global Communications, the DeVos Fieldhouse, the new science building, and the renovation of Peale Science Center—Graves Hall and Winants Chapel will again be in need of restoration and renovation. The Department of Modern and Classical Languages has moved out of Graves into the Martha Miller Center, giving the college the opportunity to make changes to Graves. It is very important that the architects chosen to do the next renovation are sensitive to the distinctive features of the building's architecture and design. It may even be possible to reverse some of the damage done in previous renovations. This centrally located, historic building, with its classic Richardsonian style, gives Hope's campus a class and style that must be preserved. Graves is a fine structure of classic nineteenth-century Romanesque beauty and has been at the center of academic life at Hope College for more than a century. May it continue for another century to be one of the most beautiful buildings on Hope's campus.

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(Endnotes)

¹ A copy of the dedication program is in the Joint Archives of Holland.

² In 1862 this group organized and became the congregation of the Second Reformed Church, or Hope Church as it is called.

³ Since education for women at Hope College did not begin until the next decade, all the graduates of the first class were men.

⁴ For more on Phelps’s role in founding Hope College, see Wynand Wichers, *A Century of Hope, 1866 – 1966* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 65-68.

⁵ Ninety-five letters from Van Raalte to Phelps, a gift from Rev. George Scholten to Hope College, can be found in the college archives. I am presently annotating them. The letters are a rich source on early Hope College history and reveal the deep friendship between the two men.

⁶ Phelps received an honorary degree from New York University in 1864. See Edward J. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1902* (New York, 1902), 654.

⁷ Dr. Scott was able to see the new building being constructed and nearing completion before he died. This news note was selected by the *Holland Sentinel*, and reprinted in the column “On the Way to Today” 30 January 1994: “The plastering of the new Graves library building on the college campus is finished. The carpenter work is likewise nearing completion and is receiving the finishing touches at the hands of the painters. The interior work throughout is in keeping with the outside appearance of the building and the whole reflects creditably upon all that has had a part in the construction of this beautiful edifice.” This note was originally published in the 20 January 1893 issue of the *Holland Sentinel*.

⁸ The primary record of these early wooden buildings is an etching done by an unknown artist about 1870. Wichers used this print for the inside cover of his history of Hope College.

⁹ His great granddaughter, Elaine Scholten Stephan, told me on 24 April 2004 that Phelps had considerable woodworking ability and was an able carpenter.

¹⁰ Wichers, 106.

¹¹ During the early years, many of the books in the college library were donations from ministers’ libraries.

¹² The Pioneer School, founded in 1851, was renamed the Holland Academy after Van Vleck Hall was built. The name of the academy was later changed to the Grammar School. This school ended its institutional life in 1938 as Hope Preparatory School.

¹³ “Reverend Josias Meulendyke, D.D.,” *Alumni Bulletin Hope College Holland, Michigan* 1, no. 2 (February 1938). Meulendyke received his prep school and college education 1867-1876.

¹⁴ Wichers, 129.

¹⁵ His wife was Maria Wilhelmina Van Raalte. They were married 24 December 1879. Elton J. Bruins, Karen G. Schakel, Sara Fredrickson Simmons, and Marie N. Zingle, *Albertus and Christina: The Van Raalte Family, Home and Roots* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 159.

¹⁶ The July 1891 issue of *The Anchor* quoted Kollen as saying that since Van Vleck caught fire at least eight times, it was vital that the library books have a fireproof building (*The Anchor* 4, no. 10 [July 1891]: 158).

¹⁷ A large amount of the funding that Hope College obtained in the first half century of its existence came from Dutch Reformed Churches in the East and Reformed Church members.

¹⁸ Full biographical sketches of Graves and Winants appeared in the *Holland City News*, 23 October 1892, shortly after the cornerstone laying for the new building. The October 1892 issue of *The Anchor* published a full report of the dedication ceremony, a list of what was placed in the cornerstone, and the information that Graves, though some eighty years of age was present at the dedication.

¹⁹ *The Anchor*, June 1894.

²⁰ This amount may be an average of the estimated cost of \$30,000 to \$50,000. The Graves and Winants families each contributed \$10,000 towards the cost of the building (*The Anchor* 6, no. 1 [October 1892], 158).

²¹ There is no firm evidence as to the number of books that Graves contributed to the college library. The editor of the 1894-95 *Catalogue of Hope College at Holland, Michigan* was clearly expecting that the college collection of nine thousand volumes was "...by a munificent donation of a friend of education, about to be increased to over twenty thousand volumes..." 36.

²² In 1993 David Jensen, director of the Hope College library, asked me to canvass the shelves in the Humanities section. I discovered several volumes that were gifts of Graves, still on the library shelves one hundred years after Graves donated them (Memo, Bruins to Jansen, 5 November 1993).

²³ Larry Wagenaar, "Centenary of a Campus Mainstay," *News from Hope*, June 1994: 8.

²⁴ It is unknown when the city gave the name of Graves Place to the 11th street block between Central and College Avenues.

²⁵ A biographical sketch of Huntley was published in *Portrait and Biographical Record of Muskegon and Ottawa Counties Michigan* (Chicago, 1893), 450-51. Huntley was an immigrant from England. He was a very successful builder in Holland, Michigan, and many of the buildings and homes he constructed are still in existence. James Huntley's papers are located in the Joint Archives of Holland.

²⁶ W. K. Johnston must have been in the early part of his career when he designed Graves/Winants as the college also chose him to design the Dimnent Memorial Chapel, which was constructed 1927-29.

²⁷ For more information on Henry Hobson Richardson, see an article by Charles L. Barstow, "Henry Hobson Richardson, Nineteenth Century Architect" in *Famous Buildings: A Primer of Architecture* (New York, 1937).

²⁸ As chair of the planning committee of the Van Wylen Library, I escorted the primary architects, Paul Sun and Geoffrey Freeman, around the campus when they visited the campus on a snowy

day, 9 February 1984, to scout out the best possible site for the new library. I remember especially how enthralled they were with Graves/Winants. They said the building was vintage Richardsonian in design. Paul Sun was also the architect for the Sackler Museum of the Smithsonian Institute.

²⁹ President Kollen proved to be a very effective fundraiser and builder, as he raised the monies for this building too. Van Raalte Hall was dedicated in 1903, Carnegie Gymnasium in 1906, and Voorhees Hall in 1907.

³⁰ The report is in the Hope College Collection, Joint Archives of Holland. With this report is a brief history of the library written by Mildred Schuppert about 1949 that confirms the Tysse report. Schuppert, secretary to President Wichers in the 1930s, resigned from that position in 1945, obtained library training, and was on the library staff when she wrote this history (conversation with Schuppert prior to her death in 1993).

³¹ This circular staircase is now in the possession of Paul and Cynthia De Maagd.

³² One story about this renovation/restoration project was published in the *Hope College Alumni Magazine* 15, no. 4 (October 1962).

³³ One such special event was Prof. James H. Tallis's dedicatory concert in the late 1960s for a new harpsichord, which was underwritten by the Jack and Richard De Witt families.

³⁴ Named in honor of Rev. Henry Schoon, professor of Greek and German ("Little' Chapel Dedicated In Memory of Dr. Schoon," *The Anchor*, 12 October 1962).

³⁵ *The Anchor* 91, no. 11 (13 December 1979).

³⁶ This remnant of glass now hangs in my office window. Dr. Wilson was able to rescue a much larger piece that may have come from the window on the west side of Graves, just to the left of the main entrance. It was then set in the south window of the slides library in the De Pree Art Center. In a conversation with me on 14 April 2004, Dr. Gordon J. Van Wylen (President of Hope College 1972-87) expressed his disappointment that business rather than historical reasons and aesthetics were not given more consideration at that time.

³⁷ An interesting story about Waverly Stone appeared in the *Holland Historical Trust Review* 3, no. 2 (spring, 1990).

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Students studying in the converted Winants Chapel, c.1940s