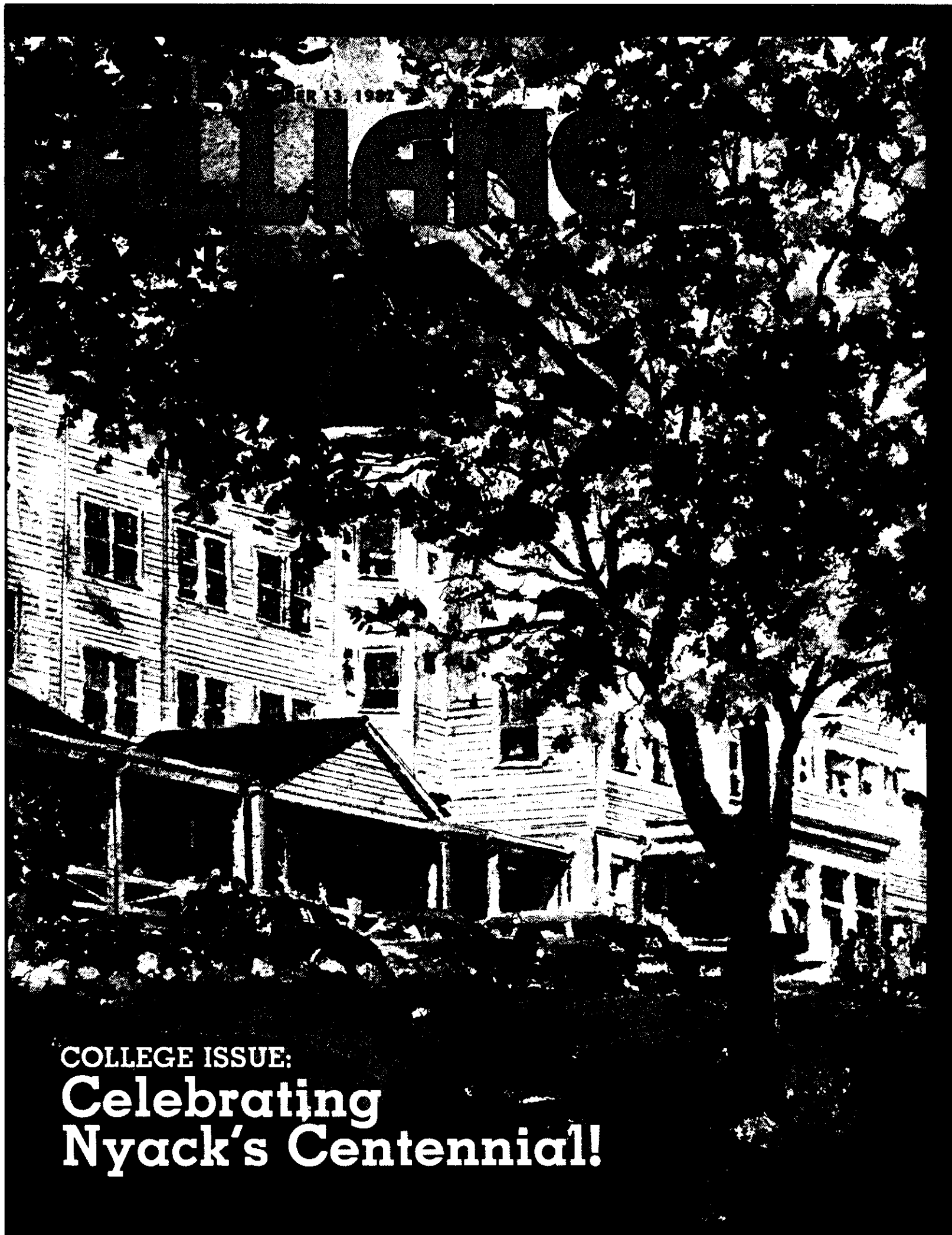


SEP 13, 1902

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COLLEGE ISSUE:

**Celebrating
Nyack's Centennial!**



In 1956 the former Clarkstown Country Club property, top of picture, became a part of Nyack College campus.

Two Institutions on a Hill

By WILLIAM D. CARLSEN

Here is the fascinating background story of Nyack College's hillside campus along the Hudson River.

In the fall of 1897, ship captains and travelers on the Hudson River noticed a new landmark. A Victorian-style building now peered down on them from a perch above the town of Nyack. The five-story structure housed the 170 students of The Missionary Training Institute. This Bible school—America's oldest—had begun 15

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Formerly the office and main studio of the Clarkstown Country Club, this building now accommodates Alliance Theological Seminary.

years earlier in New York City, 20 miles downriver.

In 1918 another institution, the Clarkstown Country Club, was moved from New York City to an estate just north of The Missionary Training Institute. It became the center for the teaching of Oriental religions, philosophy and yoga.

Under the leadership of Dr. Pierre Bernard the place became more of a secluded dwelling for Hindu sages than a typical country club. New York reporters, not knowing how to relate to this new phenomenon, offered many conflicting accounts of what happened at the club. They dubbed Dr. Bernard "Oom, the Omnipotent."

Over the next years Dr. Bernard continued his role as a *shastri*—one learned in the sacred writings of the Hindus. He rallied an assortment of socialites, actresses, prizefighters, artists, intellectuals and wealthy people to this Rockland County estate. It became known as the "place where the philosopher may dance and the fool may be provided with a thinking cap."

Complementing Dr. Bernard's many talents and interests were those

of his wife, Blanche De Vries Bernard. She was a talented dancer, singer and theatrical producer. She was also an interior decorator who made the final decisions on the architectural drawings, decor and furniture for each new club building.

For the added entertainment of guests, circuses were staged on the lawn of the club in the largest privately owned tent in the country. The club's five elephants also ambled along Main Street in Republican parades. And they augmented the herd of Ringling Brothers Circus in Madison Square Garden, New York City.

When "Mom," Dr. Bernard's star elephant, died at age 93, her death created a monstrous problem: where on Nyack's rocky hillside could anyone bury a 9,000-pound elephant? Mom was interred on what is now the site of Hilltop Elementary School, just north of the college campus.

Having lived eighty years with hardly a day of illness, Dr. Bernard succumbed to a heat wave on September 27, 1955. With his death his various enterprises also came to an end. His extensive land holdings were sold piece by piece.

About this time the neighboring Missionary College needed more land. Back in 1940 the school had ac-

quired its first full-time president, Dr. Thomas Moseley. He and his wife, Eva, had served as missionaries for twenty-five years on the China-Tibet border. Mrs. Moseley possessed the Swedish gift of hospitality and an acquired gift of Asian tact and patience. She became the perfect "first lady" for the growing school.

One of Dr. Moseley's first objectives in office was to get the school accredited by the New York State Board of Regents. Each move to broaden the academic recognition was keenly debated at the General Councils of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. At one Council session Dr. R. R. Brown, dynamic Nebraska pastor and dean of Christian radio broadcasters, argued convincingly, "I don't care how many degrees you have, just so you have a temperature!"

With state accreditation in 1946 and the offering of baccalaureate degrees in four major areas (theology, missions, music and Christian education), it became appropriate to change the name of the school. As time went on, other majors were added and in 1956 the school became Nyack Missionary College.

All these changes were seen as consistent with the vision of Dr. A. B.

Simpson, founder of the college and the Alliance. He had been a highly trained clergyman. Yet he knew that the work of God's kingdom could not be accomplished by depending entirely on an elite corps of clergymen.

Dr. Simpson believed that a religious movement succeeds only to the degree that it involves the laity. The track needed two rails—the clergy, with its specialized training, and the laity, equipped to communicate the basics of the Christian faith. These basics remained and the “temperature”—a real concern of people—also continued.

With constant growth the college was bursting out of its 11-acre campus. It was necessary to acquire adjacent property or move elsewhere. The Nyack business community did not want to lose 1,000 customers so, for the first time on the part of many townspeople, there was an interest in the school on the hill.

Most colleges could turn to their well-heeled alumni to provide capital funds for expansion. But what could be done when the majority of graduates were pastors and missionaries, many of whom were living at subsis-

tence levels? The choices were bankruptcy or faith in God for a miracle.

The college community looked beyond the limited resources of their constituency. In an act of faith Mrs. Moseley stood in front of the main gate of the Clarkstown Country Club and prayed that God would make it available to the college.

Everything was against her prayer being answered. Dr. Bernard, owner of the club, had been antagonistic to Christian missions and vowed that he would never sell to the college. The Nyack Town Board was seeking new sources of revenue and wanted to rezone the club property for apartment buildings. And the college's Board of Trustees was sometimes known to operate more by budgets than by faith.

Yet, upon Dr. Bernard's death, his widow offered the college an option to buy a good portion of the Clarkstown Country Club property. She had been impressed with the personal lives of the Nyack College students she knew. She wanted to perpetuate the institution that drew such top-notch young people to the community.

One of the students who made a most favorable impression on Mrs. Bernard was Ralph Polding. He had

served as a security guard for General Dwight Eisenhower during part of World War II. After the war he at first was too intent on building his own kingdom to give any thought to God's kingdom.

When Ralph finally sought God's will, he and his wife and two children came to Nyack. By then he was no longer eligible for financial aid under the “GI Bill.” He had to find work to support his family and pay his college expenses.

Ralph eventually became foreman of the maintenance crew at the Clarkstown Country Club. He and other student helpers established a fine record. Soon their employer found that this crew depended on more than a gung-ho attitude toward work. They sought guidance from God for problems beyond their own abilities.

On one occasion a sump pump in the basement of the main building became submerged in a foot and a half of water. Ralph and another student took the pump to a nearby garage to have it blown out.

Ralph knew that a motor must be thoroughly dry to function, but they didn't have time to wait for it to dry completely. He asked his buddy to pray. When his friend hesitated,

The main guesthouse of the Clarkstown Country Club is now Moseley Hall, men's dormitory for the college and, this year, dormitory for the seminary.



The college community looked beyond the limited resources of their community

Ralph offered a short but urgent prayer.

They plugged in the motor and it purred like new.

The Bernards often included student helpers at special dinners with their out-of-town guests. Sometimes four of the students would sing to the delight of all.

On one occasion a professor of world religions from India challenged Mr. Polding to defend his Christian faith in a public debate. What Ralph lacked in eloquence he made up for in sincerity and heartfelt conviction.

When the debate was over, the learned professor confided to his opponent, "You have a peace I don't have."

So it was on Monday, April 10, 1956, that the college trustees met to consider Mrs. Bernard's offer. The deadline was that Saturday. After considerable debate the decision in favor of buying the property squeaked through by one vote.

It was then necessary to obtain a mortgage of \$150,000. Someone knew Mr. Irving Felt, a leading real estate man in New York City for whom Felt Forum in Madison Square Garden is named.

Mr. Felt persuaded the Seamen's Bank of New York to make a loan on the grounds that Nyack College had never defaulted on its obligations. An appraisal was made in a record two days' time and the loan was approved. Even the Post Office cooperated by delivering the documents in the Saturday mail—the day of the deadline.

After the college took possession of the grounds and buildings, it soon became apparent that not all of the former occupants had vacated the premises. The main Georgian-style mansion was to become a men's dormitory that fall. The dean of men's office was in what had been a kitchen.

On a hot July day the dean's secretary was working alone in the building when suddenly she was enveloped in freezing cold and the hair on her head and arms stood up. As she turned in the direction of the cold, a hideous ethereal form came through the double doors and stood facing her. It did not speak but leered through eyes resembling pits of fire.

Having been alerted to the possibility of demon activity, the badly frightened young woman rebuked the demon in the name of Jesus. Immediately the sneer left the face of the demon and it slipped back out the door.

On another occasion several couples decided to explore the bell tower at night. As the first man went up the stairs he was hit in the chest and fell. Thinking that another student had preceded the group to play a practical joke, he reacted angrily. The others, however, assured him there was no plot. They continued up the only stairway to the top of the tower and found no one.

In the fall of 1956 the student body met in the former clubhouse for a service of dedication. They sang the hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" and prayer was offered. The air seemed electrified with a sense of the presence of Christ. The campus now totaled 63 acres.

In more recent years Bowman Memorial Gymnasium, an apartment building to house married couples and other structures have been erected on the property. Some of the former club buildings have been completely renovated to house the Alliance Theological Seminary.

In 1981-82 alumni and friends rallied financially to restore the old 1897 Institute Building (renamed Simpson Hall). The wooden structure had been condemned as a fire hazard. Now once again it stands in its original Victorian grandeur—a landmark of God's faithfulness throughout the college's century of existence.

Nyack's graduates are scattered throughout the world, ministering to the material, physical and spiritual needs of people. But in odd moments and at reunions with classmates, they indulge in fond memories of days spent on the "Mount of Prayer and Blessing," the institute on the hillside. AW



Rev. William D. Carlsen has been a missionary since 1947, first on the Tibetan border in China and later in Thailand. His book, In Search of a Miracle, from which this is an edited chapter, will be published by Nyack College.

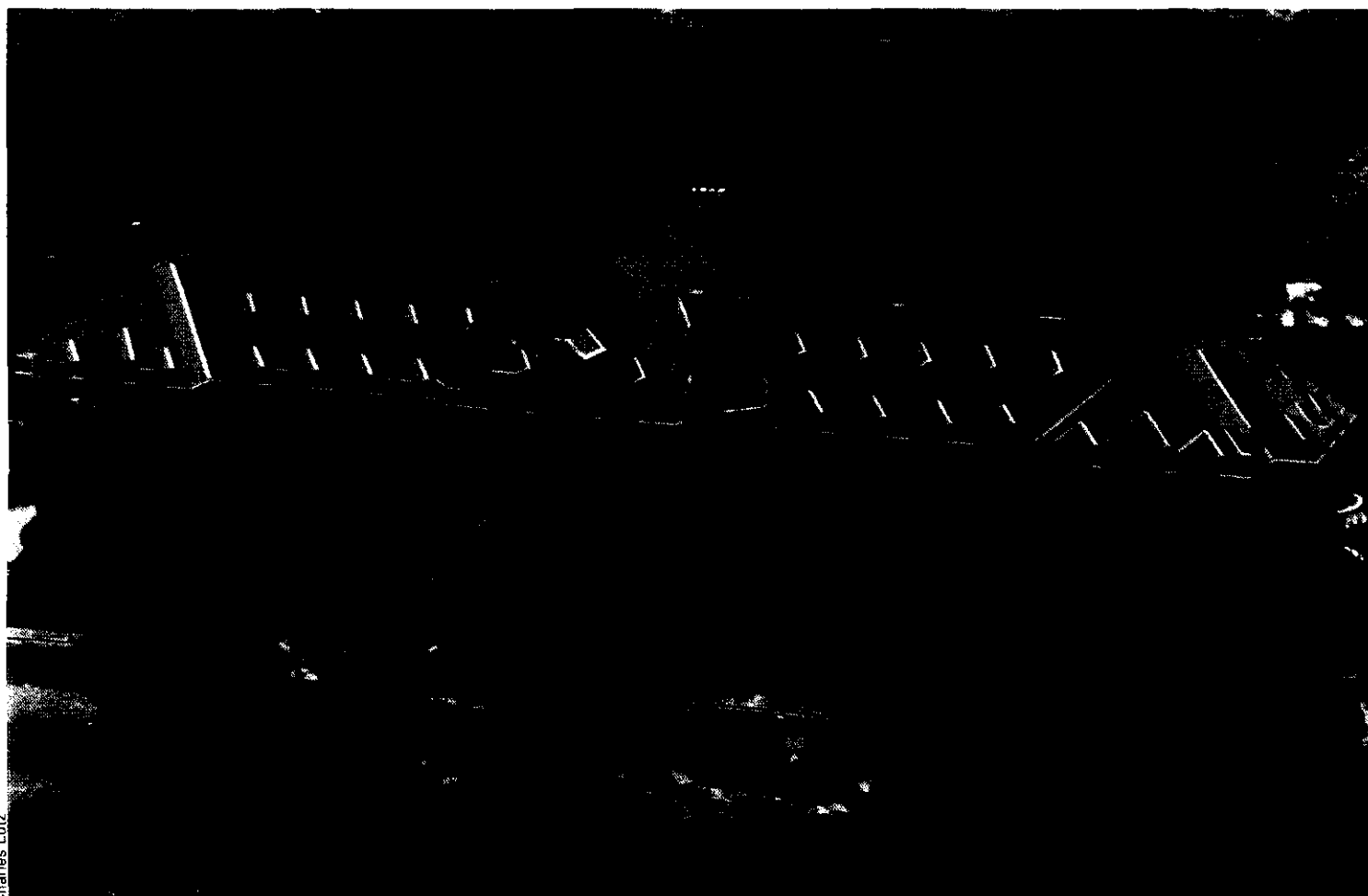


Charles Lutz

The

The largest
Victorian building
in the
Hudson River valley
between New York City
and Albany
gets a
new lease on life

By **BLANCHE
GOSSELIN**



From bare bones, left, Nyack's Simpson Hall is again the majestic Victorian lady of the Hudson River valley.

Rebirth of Simpson Hall

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out.*

So wrote the inimitable New England poet, Robert Frost. Although the setting was quite different when it came to restoring eighty-five-year-old Simpson Hall on the campus of Nyack College, those who rallied to the cause knew exactly why they wanted those walls to keep on standing.

To the thousands who have gone forth from its portals to all parts of the world, Simpson Hall is much more than stone and mortar and cedar siding. Indeed, it is a "person-

ality"—one that has left a deep impression on those who have lived under its tutelage.

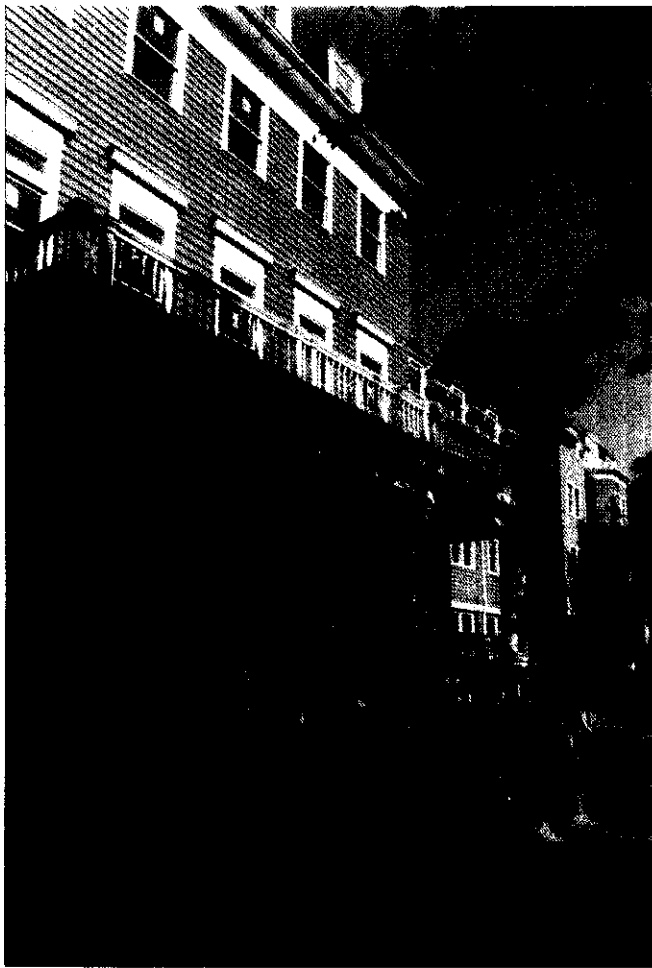
Erected in 1897, the "Institute Building" was intended to last a little more than half a century. After all, was not the Lord's return imminent, making unnecessary any longer-range plan? Meanwhile, the \$60,000 structure would adequately house the growing lay-missionary training school started fifteen years earlier in New York City by Dr. Albert B. Simpson.

The physical layout of the building included a chapel with a seating capacity of 200; more than a hundred single or double dormitory rooms; bathroom facilities on each floor; two

large dining rooms, one for men and one for women; two parlors; a library; a kitchen; two pantries; two small apartments for resident deans; guest rooms; business offices; a lobby.

But what former Nyack College students remember most is the "spirit" of the old building. It is the sense of togetherness—of "family" generated within its walls—that puts a gleam in the eyes of those who speak of it.

Everyone agrees that the centers of activity in Simpson Hall as they knew it were the dining rooms (turned coed). "Once or twice a semester we were assigned to a dining room table," recalls an alumna, now a staff



Photos by Jonathan Feather

What former Nyack College students remember most is the “spirit” of the old building

member at the college. “To have a special place in a group of eight or ten gave us an identity as part of a family within a family.

“Each table had a host and a hostess, seated at either end, who assured that proper etiquette was observed and that the needs of each one were being met. We looked forward to the shared friendship of mealtime.”

Another former student lovingly quotes “Mom” (Mrs. Grace) Stewart, the returned China missionary in charge of housekeeping, as she urged reluctant eaters to taste the “questionable vegetables.” More seriously, she remembers the biweekly dining-room devotions following the evening meal, cementing even more strongly the ties that formed around the Lord’s providential table.

At one period in the building’s his-

tory, a special attraction after the noon and evening meals was a male quartet—destined to stay together off and on for over forty years—who entertained around the flagpole outside the main entrance, sometimes improvising, sometimes honoring requests.

In an old 1929 Model A Ford they irreverently dubbed “The C. Donald McKaig Memorial Rickshaw” (after a favorite prof), these “Missionaires” would at times leave the premises to bring joy elsewhere and to help support through song their alma mater.

The same flagpole saw the gathering of other flagpoles. Who could ever forget meeting there for one of those anticipated chaperoned moonlight walks around the mountain, or leaving from there to go catch the ferry for a ride across the Hudson to Tarrytown?

But under the stress of vibrant life and passing years, Simpson Hall began to show telltale signs of wear and tear. Stairs began to creak, rooms to look a little shabby.

Most of all, everyone knew that the building was a fire hazard. President Thomas Moseley once expressed what many others feared when he admitted never going to sleep without asking for special protection against fire for the occupants of Simpson Hall.

In 1959, prompted by a series of local fires, the village of South Nyack condemned the building as unfit for residency. Meanwhile, Christie Hall had already opened as a dormitory for women. Now the evacuation of the men began, first from the top floor, then the next. The second and

At the beginning
of the college's
second century of service,
Simpson Hall stands
ready to welcome
new generations
of men and women

first floors continued to be used for classrooms and dining.

By the mid-seventies, there was serious need for more housing. Plans were proposed and approved by the Board of Trustees for a new building on the site of Simpson Hall. But response to the project was slow.

Many former students spoke instead of saving Simpson Hall. One alumnus, the president of a large construction company, thought restoration of the historic building was feasible. A special study concluded that with modern technology the building could be saved and made to meet present-day strict fire codes.

In December, 1980, the reconstruction was approved by the New York State Zoning Board of Review in New York City. The trustees reversed their decision and elected to renovate. Former students and friends rejoiced!

Schofield/Colgan, Nyack architects, were retained to make Simpson Hall "habitable, energy-efficient, accessible to the handicapped, and functional as a dormitory." It also must be suitable for use as a church-life conference center during vacation periods.

The experienced planners undertook a long process of inspecting, documenting, studying old photographs, rephotographing, measuring, cutting, numbering, storing. As much as possible of the original building was preserved. Then the structure was completely gutted.

Construction, handled by E. W. Howell Company, Inc., of Babylon,

New York, began in February, 1981. It was completed in time to welcome incoming and returning students a month ago.

Simpson Hall will be rededicated during Homecoming Weekend, October 15-16, as part of the school's Centennial Year celebration.

Wearing a fresh new look, including a highly sophisticated fire-alarm system that would no doubt astound the founder's initial "Bucket Brigade," Simpson Hall will necessarily be different in some ways. But just as a person who has not been seen for a long time is recognized by some underlying, unchangeable trait, so with this building that has meant so much to so many.

"COLLEGE LANDMARK TO BE RAZED," predicted a local newspaper headline in the winter of 1967. But the Lord had other plans. At the beginning of the college's second century of service, Simpson Hall stands ready to welcome new generations of men and women who are responding to Christ's great commission to "go . . . and teach all nations." AW



A schoolteacher for twenty-seven years, Miss Blanche Gosselin is administrative assistant to the vice-president for public affairs at Nyack College.

The A.W. TOZER Anthology

Compiled by Harry Verploegh

The essence of true religion is spontaneity, the sovereign movings of the Holy Spirit upon and in the free spirit of redeemed men. This has . . . been the hallmark of spiritual excellency.

When religion loses its sovereign character and becomes mere form, this spontaneity is lost also, and in its place come precedent, propriety, system—and the file-card mentality.

Here's how the file card works when it gets into the Christian life and begins to create mental habits: It divides the Bible into sections fitted to the days of the year and compels the Christian to read according to rule. No matter what the Holy Spirit may be trying to say to a man, still he goes on reading where the card tells him, dutifully checking it off each day.

Every Spirit-led saint knows that there are times when he is held by an inward pressure to one chapter, or even one verse, for days at a time while he wrestles with God till some truth does its work within him. To leave that present passage to follow a prearranged reading schedule is for him wholly impossible. He is in the hand of the free Spirit, and reality is appearing before him to break and humble and lift and liberate and cheer. But only the free soul can know the glory of this. To this the heart bound by system will be forever a stranger.

The glory of the gospel is its freedom.

The task of the Church is twofold: to spread Christianity throughout the world and to make sure that the Christianity she spreads is the pure New Testament kind.

—from OF GOD AND MEN