

## **Hanover College History**

*Source materials for this article came from "The History of Hanover College, 1827-1927," written by William A. Millis, Hanover's 11th president; and "Glimpses of Hanover's Past," written by Frank S. Baker, Hanover professor emeritus of journalism and College historian.*

**By Gregory L. Wright**

### **The College's Begining**

In the early 19th century, groups of devout, learned men traveled along the Ohio River, bringing the Christian gospel and education to the growing western frontier. Cincinnati and Louisville became centers of commerce and culture. The river town of Madison, halfway between them, became the major port for the new state of Indiana.

Five miles west of Madison, the Rev. John Finley Crowe served as pastor of the Hanover Presbyterian Church. He opened the Hanover Academy Jan. 1, 1827, in a small log cabin near his home. Two years later, the State of Indiana granted a charter to the Academy. On Nov. 9, 1829, the Academy's Board of Trustees accepted a proposal by the Presbyterian Synod of Indiana to adopt the school provided a theological department was established.

A two-story brick building was built to house both the Academy and the new Indiana Seminary. The State of Indiana issued a new charter to the Academy, creating Hanover College effective Jan. 1, 1833. Under this charter, the College's Board of Trustees is independent of ecclesiastical control, but has formally adopted for Hanover the standards for Presbyterian colleges, an association that continues to this day.

### **The Challenges of the First 50 Years**

Hanover College has prospered and grown in ways likely unimagined by its founder. However, it has not done so without facing and overcoming significant challenges along the way, especially in its first half-century.

In the 1830s, the College Edifice (now the Hanover Presbyterian Church) was the center of a bustling, three-acre campus. In 1834, 119 students attended Hanover Preparatory School (formerly Hanover Academy) and 101 students attended Hanover College, astonishing growth from the six students of only seven years earlier.

But in 1837, a tornado damaged the College Edifice's top story and destroyed the Academy/Seminary building. Repairs to both were completed the following year, but Hanover's enrollment and financial prospects had suffered. By 1841, College enrollment had dropped to 33 students, Hanover was heavily in debt and the Indiana Seminary had moved to New Albany (it would soon locate in Chicago, becoming McCormick Theological Seminary).

The greatest challenge of Hanover's early years, however, came in 1843. Both the College's president and its trustees accepted a proposal from Madison city leaders move Hanover College. The trustees dissolved the Hanover charter and established Madison University. However, John Finley Crowe would not let his vision die.

Crowe purchased the College property and established the Hanover Classical and Mathematical School. Only four months after Madison University was founded, its president had resigned and its students began to return to Crowe's school. By May 1844, all of Madison's students and faculty had made the trip five miles to the west.

Hanover College was officially restored when Indiana's legislature granted a new charter to the College Christmas Day. Thus, Crowe, a man who served the College for more than 30 years as a faculty member and who refused to ever allow his name to be placed in nomination for its presidency, is quite accurately described as "twice the founder of Hanover College."

This period of challenge produced new opportunity for Hanover College. A refocused Board of Trustees voted in 1849 to purchase a 200-acre farm one-half mile to the east of Hanover's campus. This land, overlooking the Ohio River, serves as the centerpiece of the College campus today. By the mid-1850s, Classic Hall was constructed on a bluff known as the Point, and College classes were moved to that location. "Old Classic" would be Hanover's signature building for more than 90 years.

Hanover College would face other challenges in the 1860s and 1870s. The Civil War, especially the Confederate maneuvers known as "Morgan's Raid," came close to campus; faculty and student were alerted that the troops might try to burn Classic Hall. In 1870, Presbyterian Church officials proposed that Hanover College be merged with Wabash College, with Hanover becoming a women's school. The Hanover Board of Trustees rejected that proposal, as well as one from businessmen in 1873 that would have moved the College to Indianapolis and renamed it Johnson University.

By 1879, Hanover College officials had fought off efforts to move the campus north, but were faced with another financial crisis. In July, the Board of Trustees voted to reduce faculty salaries and that of the president by 25 percent. The president resigned in protest.

A trustee then proposed that College operations cease until Hanover "may be reopened as a first-class institution upon a self-sustaining basis." The proposal failed by only one vote. Once again, a challenge for Hanover College to overcome would serve as a catalyst for triumph.

### **A Legacy of Leadership Begins**

Just a few weeks after that fateful meeting of the Board of Trustees, Daniel Webster Fisher began his service as Hanover College president. His inauguration marked the beginning of a legacy of leadership that continues to this day.

While the first 50 years of Hanover College's existence produced many fine graduates and a respected faculty, Hanover had seen nine presidents in that span. None had served longer than nine years and five had served three years or less. This turnover at the top had affected the College's ability to raise public awareness and financial backing.

Fisher would lead Hanover until his retirement in 1907. He was followed in the presidency by William A. Millis (1908-1929), Albert G. Parker Jr. (1929-1958), John E. Horner (1959-1987) and Russell Nichols (1987-2007). Remarkably, the College has had only five presidents in the last 122 years.

This stability of leadership ushered in a new era of growth and success. Fisher taught several classes and was a tireless fund-raiser and student and faculty recruiter. He oversaw the construction of five buildings, including Hendricks Library. Named for an alumnus who had served as U.S. vice president and now called Hendricks Hall, it is the oldest classroom building on Hanover's campus.

Millis presided over many triumphs that would turn Hanover College into a liberal arts college meeting the needs of the early 20th century. In 1916, a new high school was established in the town of Hanover, allowing the Hanover Preparatory School to discontinue operation and College officials to focus completely on instruction for undergraduates. By 1923, College enrollment topped the 500 mark for the first time.

The College also began to expand its curriculum. In Hanover's first century, the majority of graduates became ministers or teachers, but under Millis, the College increased its scope of instruction in the natural sciences and the arts. The faculty doubled in size, reaching 25 in his last year in office. The future looked bright for Hanover College, but challenges were to come.

### **Three Decades of Physical Expansion**

Albert G. Parker Jr. was inaugurated as Hanover's 12th president Nov. 27, 1929, less than one month after the stock market crash that precipitated the Great Depression. The economic hard times cut investment revenues and operational expenses had to be closely monitored. But this challenge provided the College with one of its greatest rewards.

William Henry Donner had attended Hanover for just one term in 1882 before going home to manage his family's business. By 1936, he had retired after making his fortune in the steel business and made his first gift to the College. During the next decade, he donated more than \$1 million to Hanover and in each of the three "Donner Challenges," his contributions were matched by other alumni and friends. By 1946, the College endowment was triple what it had been when Parker became president.

In the midst of this financial triumph, however, Hanover College received two of its stiffest challenges within days of each other. On Dec. 7, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into World War II. In just two years, Hanover's enrollment would plummet to 164 students, only 20 of them men. And in the early morning of Dec. 19, a huge fire destroyed most of Classic Hall.

Parker and the Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to build a new Classic Hall instead of trying to restore the old one, a decision that many alumni protested. But the decision provided new opportunities. Girded by the money provided by Donner and two other members of the Board of Trustees, P.E. Goodrich and Charles Lynn, Parker saw his vision of a new, modern Hanover campus come true.

By 1946, the postwar enrollment at Hanover had more than rebounded. It had ballooned to 679 students and the first great construction period of the College's history was under way. Academic buildings received first priority.

The new Classic Hall was one of four buildings, all completed in 1947, to surround a new quadrangle near the Point. The other structures were a science building named for

Goodrich, a physical education facility bearing Lynn's name, and an auditorium. All stand today (Goodrich is now a wing of the Science Center) and Parker Auditorium, as it was named in 1953, has become the College's most recognizable building.

Donner Hall had been completed in 1939, and in the years between 1949 and 1956, two other residence halls (one named for Donner's daughter), three fraternity houses and three sorority houses were built to house the College's skyrocketing student population. By 1956, the quadrangle Hanoverians now recognize was complete, graced by a new library, today called Science Hall; a new President's Home, the result of another gift from Donner; and Brown Memorial Chapel, a memorial to his parents by J. Graham Brown, who attended Hanover from 1898 to 1900.

In 1958, Hanover College was on solid financial footing with assets approaching \$8 million, an enrollment of 750 and a modern physical plant. As with other times in its history, however, challenges would have to be met and overcome.

### **An Era of Triumphs... and One Very Large Challenge**

Albert G. Parker Jr. had announced that he would retire as Hanover's president Sept. 1, 1958. His death while still in office March 22 came as a great shock to all. Goodrich had died in 1951 and Donner in 1953, so Lynn's sudden passing exactly six months after Parker's naturally caused doubts about the future. Hanover was temporarily without a president and had lost its three largest benefactors.

Two events in late 1958 removed that doubt. One was the decision by Lynn's widow, Dorothy, to assume her husband's seat on the board, which continued an important philanthropic presence for the next three decades. The other was the arrival of John E. Horner, who assumed Hanover's presidency in the fall and was inaugurated the following May.

Under Horner's 29-year leadership, Hanover enjoyed unprecedented growth in its academic program, financial standing and student enrollment. Soon after his arrival, he encouraged faculty members considering curricular reform. The result was the Hanover Plan, begun in fall 1962. It divided the academic year into two 14-week terms, in which students took three classes, and a five-week Spring Term, in which students took one course of specialized, intensive study. With some modifications, it still serves as Hanover's curricular model today.

By the mid-1960s, the campus expanded to more than 500 acres of land, enrollment topped 1,000 students, and Hanover's assets approached \$15 million. The next step was an upgrade to the College's facilities.

The Administration Building and Wiley Hall, a residence hall named for the graduate who wrote the Pure Food and Drug Act, were completed in 1963. Katharine Parker Residence Hall, named for Parker's widow, was built the following year. In 1967, the J. Graham Brown Campus Center was dedicated. Hanover's first physical education complex, featuring a football field, track, baseball field and tennis courts, was finished in 1972 and named for L.S. Ayres. A member of the Board of Trustees.

Finally, in September 1973, Duggan Library, named for Brown's sister, was opened. The facility greatly enhanced scholarship and research capabilities for faculty and students

and enabled the College's collection to grow from 43,000 in 1958 to more than 300,000 in 1985.

This time, Hanover's sense of triumph lasted eight months. By the next spring, the College would face perhaps its sternest challenge ever. In the late afternoon of April 3, 1974, a tornado roared through campus with devastating results. Somehow, no one was killed or seriously injured. But 32 of the College's 33 buildings were damaged, including two that were completely destroyed and six that sustained major structural damage. Hundreds of trees were down, completely blocking every campus road. All utilities were knocked out and communication with those off campus was nearly impossible.

Government officials estimated the damage at \$10 million. Some wondered if Hanover College could survive. But Hanoverians, led by Horner, sprung into action. Winter Term ended one week early and students were dismissed, but many of them stayed to help faculty, staff and others clear the debris. The Board of Trustees met April 5 in emergency session and vowed to lead the efforts in rebuilding and improving Hanover College and to do so without any federal disaster assistance, continuing Hanover's tradition of financial independence.

Within a week, roads were passable and major services restored. Contributions poured in to cover Hanover's \$1 million in uninsurable losses, a figure that would be raised in just three months. Spring Term opened April 22 with full enrollment, only 19 days after the tornado. An editorial in The Indianapolis Star described the effort as "a private miracle."

By fall, most reconstruction was finished. New telephone and electrical lines were installed underground, increasing the campus beauty. Horner had feared that enrollment would drop, but it increased by 50 students. By spring 1975, replanting efforts completed Hanover's recovery.

It was Horner's finest hour as Hanover president, but the College would enjoy many more triumphs in the 1970s and 1980s. A new Center for Fine Arts, later named for the Lynns, opened in 1978. Two fund-raising drives raised more than \$10 million each. When Horner retired in 1987, Hanover's endowment was more than \$40 million.

### **The Liberal Arts in the 21st Century**

Russell Nichols was inaugurated as Hanover's 14th president Sept. 26, 1987. He quickly began a series of initiatives to improve the Hanover experience for students both inside and outside the classroom.

The number of full-time faculty was increased over a five-year period from 72 to 94, lowering the student-faculty ratio and allowing for more independent research and study. Six new academic majors were added. Each room in every living unit was equipped with a direct-dial telephone, ending years of having a campus operator direct all calls. Academic scholarships for incoming and returning students were increased.

The response was immediate. Several outstanding new faculty came to Hanover; some were instrumental in developing a new set of curricular requirements still grounded in the liberal arts. The Office of Admission received 200 more applications for admission in

1992 than it did in 1987. In 1989, the average Scholastic Assessment Test score of those freshmen topped 1,000 for the first time. In 1992 and again in 1998, Hanover graduated the most seniors in its history.

The Campaign for Hanover, started in 1990 and completed in 1995, raised more than \$60 million, more than double what the College's total endowment had been just eight years earlier. That campaign was helped by an anonymous bequest of more than \$30 million, the largest gift in Hanover history.

The last few years have brought several new triumphs. They include the 1995 opening of the \$11 million Horner Health and Recreation Center, named for the president emeritus and his wife, and the 2000 dedication of a \$23 million Science Center, which enabled all of the College's five natural sciences to be housed in the same facility.

The faculty has developed 10 approved off-campus study programs, allowing students to spend a semester in Belgium, Turkey, Australia, Mexico, and other countries around the world. In 1997, Hanover's fiber-optic network was completed, linking every faculty and administrative office and every student living-unit room via computer. In 1999, the Josephine Ogle Center provided a conference facility and a new standard in "suite-style" living for students.

Today, Hanover College boasts three straight years of enrollment topping 1,100 students; a respected faculty numbering more than 100 members; a 650-acre campus that draws busloads of tourists; and total investments of nearly \$200 million. Duggan Library is being renovated to expand its collections and enlarge the College archives. Classic Hall renovations are planned for 2003. A new, "suite-style" residence hall is being built and the existing living units will be renovated. Arts performances and scholarly symposia have turned Hanover into a cultural center for the surrounding area.

As Hanoverians celebrate 175 years of College history, they indeed see a Hanover that has prospered and grown in ways that the Rev. John Finley Crowe could hardly imagine. After all, this fall's enrollment is just short of the number of graduates the College produced in its first century. By 2027 and Hanover's bicentennial, its triumphs may include things unimaginable today.

But in an era of constant change, Hanover is still a liberal arts college providing quality, liberal arts education. Few colleges have equaled Hanover in staying true to its mission since its founding, a mission that has served as a beacon through the challenges, opportunities and triumphs the oldest private, four-year college in Indiana has experienced in its 175 years.