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COMMEMORATION

...OF...

The One Hundredth Anniversary

...OF THE...

Rebuilding and Rededication

...OF...

“Old West”



Monday, June 6th, 1904

PROGRAM

11:00 A. M.

Declaration

President Reed

College Anthem—"Noble Dickinsonia"

King

Alma Mater, tried and true,
Noble Dickinsonia,
Oft our hearts shall turn to you,
Noble Dickinsonia.
How each ancient classic hall
Fondest memories recall,
Sacred is each gray old wall,
Noble Dickinsonia.

Scion of a hundred years,
Noble Dickinsonia,
Witness of our smiles and tears,
Noble Dickinsonia.
Age shall not thine honors dim ;
Till death comes with visage grim,
We will chant our loving hymn,
Noble Dickinsonia.

Men may come and men may go,
Noble Dickinsonia,
Yet in deep and peaceful flow,
Noble Dickinsonia,
Shall thy stream of learning wide,
Through the ages gladly glide,
Ever to thy sons a pride,
Noble Dickinsonia.

Historical Sketch

Robert E. McAlarney, Esq., '93,
of The Evening Post, New York City

Commemorative Ode

Gen. Horatio C. King, LL. D., '58,
of New York

Addresses

Hymn—"America"

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing,
Land where my fathers' died,
Land of the pilgrim's pride,
From every mountain side,
Let freedom ring.

My native country, thee—
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love.
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees,
Sweet freedom song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break;
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to thee,
Author of Liberty,
To thee we sing.
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by thy might,
Great God our king.

Benediction

West College.

1.

Ever arduous is the labor of the historian; still more difficult the undertaking of the honest eulogist; but trebly difficult the task of the chronicler, who seeks to gather sanely and without colour of false sentiment, the truth concerning the work and worth of a pile of brick or stone - be it castle, cathedral, or hall of learning.

Your general or your statesman leaves behind him at least a fragment of his personality, oft-times written in his own hand: the dullest ploughshare of any nation's progress turns a furrow plainly visible upon the maps. Succeeding generations may clash concerning a vagueness of motive here or a seeming blunder there, but ever one discovers a modicum of certainty from which to deduce.

The biographer of things architectural fares but faultily. At best he must sift for his facts at the bottom of the dust bins of vanished generations, patiently, and avoiding the ever-at-elbow impulse to take for granted. One may utter placid extravagancies beside a monument upon some hero's anniversary day -- the dead may not disclaim, and six feet of earth makes all ungenerous him who would demur. But venerable walls are both living and the dead. Part of them lies interred with the silence of men and things long gone; part exists with the present; a still greater part stretches forth into the unseen but hopefully desired future. It were a callous chronicler indeed who, facing grayed blocks of stone, failed to hew close to the straight cleavage line of truth-telling.

We cannot better approach that for which we are to-day gathered to honor, than in the spirit of William Fitzstephen, the trusted clerk of Thomas á Becket, who in prefacing ^a~~his~~ life of his murdered superior, spake thusly of the city of London:

Among the noble cities of the world that Fame celebrates, the City of London of the Kingdom of the English, is the one seat that pours out its fame more widely, sends to farther lands its wealth and trades, lifts its head higher than the rest. It is happy in the healthiness of its air, in the Christian religion, in the strength of its defences, the nature of its site, the honour of its citizens, the modesty of its matrons; pleasant in sports; fruitful of noble men. Let us look into these things separately.

The project of erecting West College was first discussed in 1791, eight years after the founding of Dickinson. At that time, Chief Justice Taney relates, the commencements, although observed with much ceremony, were held in a "small, shabby building fronting on a dirty alley." Taney was graduated with the class of 1795, and his first impressions of commencement were the vivid ones of a Freshman. In 1791 a grant of fifteen hundred pounds sterling was made to the college by the Legislature, and immediately after the announcement of the gift, a committee was appointed to negotiate for the purchase of a lot in the borough from the Penns.

Seven years were allowed to go by however, before the committee was able to fix upon a fit site for a new college house. In 1798 the present Dickinson campus, on the extreme western limit of the then town of Carlisle, was purchased from the Penns in fee, for \$150. The land was part of a large common, unfenced, and was used freely by

the town for anything from week end pastimes to pasturing cattle. It is said that the youth of Carlisle did not take the curtailment of their playground in good part. The Dickinson acres had scarce the time to realize their new-found dignity before the development of the inevitable "town and gown" ^{fund} spirit, which obtains in every college and university community, but which has more or less disappeared along with hazing, the cane-rush and kindred rashes of the undergraduate.

The first West College was by no means the building of today. Had the original structure been spared to us we should see brick walls like those of Massachusetts and Harvard halls at Cambridge. It's erection was hurried by carpenters and masons, and many of the students are said to have voluntarily aided in the labor, so eager were they to take up quarters in the new structure and leave the "dirty alley" of which Taney speaks. It is not improbable that some of them may have put in a portion of the Christmas recess in this manner. Travel was drearily slow and appallingly costly in those days, and many a student went through an entire college course without returning to his people between terms. Taney went home but twice during his course, says Dr. Himes in his excellent history of Dickinson, without frequent recourse to which this sketch could never have been written.

"Older" West College was so far completed by the latter part of January, 1803, as to be partially occupied. To the new building the library, globes, and scientific apparatus were to be transferred

as soon as the finishing touches had been given. Succeeding misfortune was in a measure kind. The transfer of the college treasures had not been effected when, on the third of February, 1803, "College House" as West College was then called, was burned to the ground.

It is a trifle uncertain whether the conflagration began in the daytime or at night, but at all events none of the students were injured, although destruction was rapid and total. The flames were caused by a wood fire on the common. A strong west wind carried sparks through the empty window sashes of an unfinished room, and mocked the efforts of the undergraduate bucket brigade. Blazing shingles were swept across town as far as the Letort spring, and narrators of the calamity declare that at one time the entire town was endangered. A providential fall of snow is said to have saved Carlisle.

The blow was a really terrible one. The new building had not been altogether paid for and the finances of the institution were in a depleted condition. But very bravely both town and college went to work. Subscription papers for re-building were taken from house to house and a hurried meeting of the trustees was called, at which an appeal for funds was issued. Many men prominent in public life were among those who contributed. The destruction of the college, says Doctor Himes "was regarded as a national calamity. Political animosities were softened by it. The college had been notoriously in sympathy with the Adams administration in its trustees, its faculty, and

its students. But at this juncture, of seventeen members of Congress who contributed to the re-building of the college, all but one were Republicans, and even Jefferson received the committee courteously and gave \$100."

In August, 1803, the relaying of the foundation stones took place. As in the former building, brick was to be used. But when the plans were submitted to Latrobe, the government architect at Washington, he argued that "either brick or stone would rust and acquire an appearance of age, which, however, would not be objectionable, as painters in their drawings, give even new buildings the rust of antiquity to make them venerable, and in large buildings and of a public nature, it is especially becoming." But he urged that stone be used in view of the fact that the edifice was to be of considerable size. Stone, he said, would secure for it an appearance of strength. Latrobe's advice was followed.

The length of the building was one hundred and fifty feet and its breadth forty-five feet. An unusually careful working out of plans was followed to secure a harmony in dimensions and altitudes. It was the desire of the trustees that their misfortune should prove to be a beneficial experience, and the second structure was larger than the first. It was not ready for occupancy until November 1805. Even then money failed and there still remained much to be done in the way of interior finishing. As late as 1821 class room and dormitory partitions were being erected.

From 1803 until a few years ago, West College sheltered the two literary bodies which have had such a long and honorable existence, almost coincident with that of Dickinson--the Belles Lettres and Union Philosophical Societies, best comparable in their scope and meaning with the Clio and Whig societies of Princeton. Both organizations met until 1808 in the Carlisle Court House. In that year the trustees granted to them use of the halls at opposite ends of the top floor of West College, which during so many succeeding years rang with undergraduate eloquence.

There must have been stirring themes for discussion in those days. The United States was yet an unstable confederation, not very much older than the college itself. As Congress and the state legislatures developed policies, we can fancy that these same things were threshed out by the students with an equal earnestness. In the year A. D. 1904 the complexion of things is otherwise. Internal quarrel and foreign relations still form the themes for vigorous, even bitter debate, it is true. We even take our politics at whiter heat than a century ago; we run more to invective, and more ungraceful invective than our forefathers employed; the sword-play of smooth verbal Toledo has been tossed away to rust, while its place has been taken by the bludgeon of blunt speech. And yet, behind all of our arguments, behind all the utterances of both the amateur campus orator and the professional politician, there is a smug satisfaction wanting in those earlier days. For we know that in this day and generation, come what may, whether one or another faction ~~may~~ for the time prevail, the national compass is unswervingly true, the admiral upon the bridge wise and to-be-trusted, and the great ship of state seaworthy to ride out any gale. It was different then.

I think everyone of us will continue to have an increasing affection for the two old societies. They have served and will continue to serve their purposes ably and well. But let us look at them in their youth, if you will, proud of their new homes in the one college structure, the hundredth year of whose rebuilding we celebrate to-day. Let us do this not for the sake of contrast, but in the investigating spirit of the sketch. Then, mark you, it was a far cry to the entrance of the Greek letter fraternity, the diversified interests in athletics, to even the inter-collegiate debate. Of the three the latter might have proved popular in that age, had not remoteness yet remained unconquered by the railroad.

It was a state~~men~~-producing age. The ability to deliver a staunch and polished argument was as distinguished a college honor then, as the captaincy of an eleven, a nine, or a track team is to-day. That the instinct of the two rival societies was genuinely toward culture is demonstrated by the early nuclei of libraries formed by them. The Belles Lettres--the senior body by some three years--began a collection of volumes in 1791. It was slow work, ^{of course} ~~to be sure~~. In 1810 the catalogue of books had not outgrown a slip of paper pasted upon the door of the meeting hall. And yet, the Dickinson library of to-day owes its existence to that humble effort, and the newer library guild, only in its swaddling clothes, and destined we trust to grow lustily, crying loudly the while, must inevitably trace its real inspiration to the earnest endeavor by the handful of knee-breeched and buckled striplings, striving with one another in inter-society rivalry more than a century ago.

One is apt--at least while he is an undergraduate--to regard as a thing of course, the dignity of age in college custom or

hall; to now and then treat lightly some relic fallen into the background, and mayhap dusty from lack of inspection. By the time one leaves his alma mater and has progressed somewhat into the maze of things worldly, this attitude vanishes. Then one realizes how immeasurably much a century of past may mean. You may not transplant it; at best you reproduce its shadow. Columbia, once Kings College, possessor of a worthy and honored age, now rich beyond college dreams of avarice and proudly set upon Morningside Heights where laps the broad ribbon of the Hudson; she may not look to again take her place with Harvard and Yale until the rude hand of years has disfigured the perfect lines of her carvings; until the storms of a hundred winters have mellowed the staring white of her Ionic columns; until her campus has acquired those indefinable (but none-the-less felt) landscape wrinkles, which mean so much to the man who really cares for his college.

West College was the scene of the birth of the sophomore class at Dickinson. Until 1814 the classes had been but three in number, Freshman, Junior and Senior. It was unanimously decided by the trustees and faculty that there should be four student bodies for the most efficient carrying on of work, and hence the Sophomores. In the minds of many succeeding faculties it may have come as an earnest fancy, that their predecessors of 1814 wrought more unwisely than they knew. A Sophomore class is not a thing to be conjured into being lightly, yet since 1814 it has been with us.

It may have been only a coincidence, but about this time great difficulties arose in maintaining proper college discipline. By a curious defect in the college charter, the trustees and the faculty were joint administrators of undegraduate ^{Control} discipline. And,

as might have been expected, there was dissension. The students, quick to seize an advantage, with two parties in authority ~~appointed~~ before whom to lay appeals, began a series of insubordinations which kept the professors who lived in West College, in a continual state of disquietude. Even chapel services, held on the first floor, in the room now used as a hall for the Y. M. C. A. ~~of the college~~, were not suffered to remain undisturbed. The town buzzed about the student disorder just as the town talks now when there is noise upon the campus. The Board of Trustees ~~decided~~ ^{agreed} that the faculty was not qualified to cope with the situation unaided. A resolution was passed by which each professor was required to report in writing every Saturday, to the Secretary of the Board, a list of the delinquents who had come under his personal supervision, together with the judgment of the faculty in each case. This was considered presuming by the faculty, several of whom promptly resigned, and the trustees experiment was soon after abandoned.

In 1814 too the Commencement in Old West was robbed of much of its impressiveness, by the disappearance of the greater part of the senior class to participate in the defence of Philadelphia against the threatened assault of the British. It speaks well for the patriotism of the college that the majority of the diplomas had to be conferred in absentia. In the following year occurred the happening which has never failed to be the keenly enjoyed subject of speculation by every man that ever lived in the old building-- the fatal college duel, which resulted in the death of a member of the Junior class, and the hurried flight of five unde^rgraduates ~~for~~ ^{who} participated in the affair. One story gives the cause of the quarrel as a political dispute growing out of a debate; another

introduces the inevitable love affair. The truth is hard to find. But we know that of the handful of students who stole out of West College in two groups, to circle widely and then meet over a box of pistols, one remained behind very still, his last lecture attended; and five others fled silently from Dickinson forever.

Who were they; are their initials among those cut upon window ledge or timeworn steps; did any of them room where you and I roomed?

Who knows? But what West College man has failed of some summer evening, with the stillness in the wide corridors, to ~~hear~~ ^{hear} in fancy the ~~to see~~ ^{to see} hasty steps upon the stairs, the white faced group taking counsel behind a locked door, and to paint the horror ~~the~~ ^{that} morning brought ~~upon~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{little} chapel gathering?

The advent of the Civil War emptied rooms in West. At this time the percentage of students from the South was large, and at the first sign of their being needed at home they left, many of them not ^{again} to see the stone walls of the building that had been their home, until they marched through Carlisle, an invading army of gray, sweeping on to Harrisburg. The Commencement of 1863 ~~in the chapel~~ was hurried through ~~with~~ ^{afterward} half informally, because of the rumored nearing of the Confederates, although it was not until a day or two later that the invaders reached Carlisle ^{fresh} from the sacking of Chambersburg. The presence of Dickinson men in the ragged Southern brigades was sure guerdon for the safety of the college. Not even a tree of the campus was marred. ^I ~~One~~ likes to fancy that perhaps more than one weary officer ^{and} ~~or~~ private stretched ~~out~~ his tired limbs for a brief rest in the room that had been his own a few months before. But when the troops under General Fitz Hugh Lee shelled Carlisle afterward, several missiles tore up the campus turf and one shell

went through the window of the President's lecture

passed through the window of the President's lecture room.

The old chapel with its low wooden gallery, where the college wheeldâ with its back to the faculty when the morning prayer was begun, is ~~no more~~ ^{transformed}. Steam heat has replaced the rusty stoves, and the dormitory wings are no longer tenanted by faculty residents. One hears no ~~longer~~ ^{more} the trampling of many feet on a Wednesday afternoon when the societies meet. Even the old bell ~~is to~~ ^{must} swing no longer from its ancient perch, but will clang from a belfry upon the new Denny Hall. Who is there left to tell of Spradley's suppers, spread upon spotless white opposite the bell-room door, just before summer twilight, with all the water pitchers upon the corridor trained at the east window in charge of a trusted detail, to repel the hungry hordes from East College?

What do they know now of the nights when elbow upon window sill, the ^{whole} third floor stared ~~at~~ hopefully at the college's only sprinter wearing the college's only pair of spiked shoes, practising at night upon our only cinder track, the path from West College to South. It is not so very long ago that we played our foot ball games out at the Indian School grounds, the eleven running all the way there and back, ^{aye} and the visiting elvens too. These things are changed. And of what moment a few jumbled recollections?

Old West, as we look at you to-day, so you are regarding us, intently, eagerly. But the advantage is altogether yours. Even the oldest of us has but the background of a generation or two to guide his vision. Your's is the view-point of a rounded out century.

You have seen this campus take on the quiet atmosphere of learning. You have watched the tallest of these trees, which frame the dignity of your years, advance from the feeble nursling to the glory of arboreal maturity. You have sighed when the rude blasts have stricken down the sturdiest of them, their swaying branches robbed by the lapse of time of the running sap.

You have seen classes come and go. You have heard the heart-beats of a host of hopes. Ah, what an army of gentle ghosts flits unseen at night about your silent bell-tower, whispering of things long gone. You have watched these same classes straggle back, fragment by fragment, from Commencement Day to Commencement. You have marked that many have succeeded, but you have perceived upon the faces of as many the unmistakable handwriting of disappointment and failed-in ambition. And you have given an equal welcome to both.

Men of the college, Old West is yours. Poor-souled of a deed, the man among you, whose heart has never been stirred by her noble beauty. The feet of a hundred classes have trod her steps where yours tread now. (Be loyal to them and to her.)

Fellow alumni, Old West is ours. And the memory of her makes us send back this message to the men of Dickinson. Hear it, you undergraduates. You are leaving a legacy to the many who will follow you. Let it be a legacy of refinement, of a keen observance

of the code of honor in all things, in class-room as well as on the foot-ball field.

Ladies and gentlemen of the town of Carlisle, Old West is yours. Your forefathers were present at her founding, they labored valiantly for her instant uprearing when the withering touch of fire crumbled the scarce-christened walls of the original structure. Ever remember that her history and future is inseparably bound up in yours.

President Reed and honored members of the Faculty, Old West is doubly yours. Her destiny is safe in your hands. Could ivied stone speak this day, it could say no greater praise than that.

(pick up last paragraph in original Ms)

Old West, staunch through a hundred years, I salute you. May the number of your sons increase. May the rains and snows of another century beat upon you gently. May ten thousand daybreaks and ten thousand settings of the sun find you hale and hearty as of yore. Skoal to you, Old West--and again SKOAL!

