

ILIFF AS I DID NOT KNOW IT

MARTIN RIST

I shall be brief, dealing only with a few highlights of the early days of Iliff. As you are all aware, or should be aware, in keeping with the desires of her first husband, John Wesley Iliff, the noted cattleman, in 1889 his widow, now married to another noted man, Bishop Henry White Warren, endowed The Iliff School of Theology with the sum of \$100,000 in memory of her first husband. It was designed to be a graduate school of the University of Denver, which was in the process of moving from downtown Denver to a forty acre plot of land in University Park donated by a well-to-do character, Rufus Clark, popularly known as Potatoe Clark. William Seward Iliff, John Wesley Iliff's surviving son, gave \$60,000 for the sandstone building so familiar to all of us. The two daughters, Edna and Louise, also were to play a part in the development of the school. Mrs. Warren was a very unusual, high minded, and capable person. Bishop Warren also was quite unusual. He had been a business man and a state legislator; he was a very effective preacher; he was a scientist, with astronomy as his main interest, a world wide traveler and an educator as well as being a capable administrator.

At about the same time that the school was founded, Mrs. Warren had a red sandstone mansion erected at Warren and Cook. When word came to her that she had been severely criticized for spending \$50,000 on the mansion, instead of giving the money to a more worthy cause, she firmly replied, "The mansion cost \$100,000, not \$50,000."

The school opened in 1892 with a small faculty and a small student body. Accordingly, both the faculty and the student body were very select. The faculty, according to the 1892 bulletin, consisted of Chancellor William Fraser MacDowell of the University of Denver, noted for his preaching ability. He later became a bishop of the M. E. Church. He taught moral and mental philosophy and Christian evidences, and was also instructor in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology. We wonder that he had any time for his duties as chancellor. Bishop Henry White Warren was a lecturer on English Bible and Practical Theology. Dr. Wilbur Fletcher Steele, a very scholarly man, was professor of exegetical theology.*Dr. John Robert van Pelt, who was to marry one of Bishop Warren's two daughters, "the better one,"

This is one of several unpublished manuscripts from the pen of the late Professor Martin Rist. It was a chapel talk given around 1965 and is typical of his pulpit style.

*He was the father of the celebrated author, Wilbur Daniel Steele, who graduated from the University of Denver in 1907. (Ed.)

he said, was professor of systematic and historical theology. He was a musician, and taught hymnology as well. Some years ago by exercising some diplomacy I persuaded him to give us his collection of German theological books and his collection of hymns and hymnology. As a result, we have one of the better collections of hymns and hymnology in the country.

The regular course of study was for three years. The degree offered was the S.T.B. There was also provision for special, non-degree students. Tuition for those who were candidates for the ministry was free; Others paid \$25.00 with \$15.00 to be paid in advance. Also, students who were ministerial candidates were given free lodging (there was a fee for heat and lights). However, they did have to provide their own food and clothing.

The present building was not occupied until 1893. In addition to offices and class rooms it had a library (where the lounge is at present) which had some 4,000 volumes by 1900. There was also a gymnasium under the library. The wrestling room was where the president's outer office is, and the showers were located where Bin Gilbert's office is. (Room #1) An Alumni Association was organized in May of 1896; by the five members of the senior graduating class. I do not know what happened to the three graduates of 1895, but they were probably included later on.

A brief look at the curriculum is in order. Hebrew and Greek were required courses in the first year. A first year course in Systematic Theology is described as Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology.

Practical Theology consisted in part of sacred rhetoric, review, of the ancient pulpit, physical and vocal development, expression by voice and action. A course on missions is described as "lectures on the obligations, working forces, inadequate methods, true theory, successes, reflex benefits, and so forth, of Christian missions." An Old Testament course included in part of a section on Semetic (sic!) Archaeology. There was also a course on Social Theology, briefly described as Studies in Sociology.

It was also possible to take courses in music, law, and medicine at the University of Denver. Likewise, an Iliff student might take courses leading to a Ph.D. degree at the University of Denver. David Shaw Duncan, later chancellor of the University of Denver, did this very thing, combining the theological degree with the Ph.D.

By 1900 the faculty had changed somewhat. Arthur Hyslop Briggs, who married Miss Edna Iliff, was the dean. He taught practical theology. Wilbur Fletcher Steele was now professor of Hebrew and Old

Testament Exegesis. He was on a leave of absence to study in Germany. His place was filled temporarily by Albert E. Wurst. John R. Van Pelt was still the professor of systematic theology. Later on he taught at Cornell College and at Gammon. Herbert Fisk Briggs, brother of Arthur Briggs, taught New Testament. Albert Cornelius Knudson, Professor of Historical Theology, gained fame later on at Boston as both an Old Testament Scholar and theologian. John W. Wetzel was instructor in elocution.

The 1890's were a period of great financial dislocation in the United States. This was particularly true of a frontier silver state like Colorado. Both the University of Denver and The Iliff School of Theology experienced grave financial difficulties. At the end of the year 1900 Iliff ran at deficit of a few thousand dollars. This was not insurmountable. However, due to a variety of factors the school closed its doors rather suddenly, after eight years of operation.

But this, as we know, was not final. The endowment was increased by \$250,000 with Miss Louise Iliff giving \$50,000 of this sum. A president and a new faculty were obtained, and the school opened again in 1910 as an institution that was organically separate from the University of Denver. Gray Gables, at one time Bishop Warren's residence, and described as a charming home, had been acquired as a dormitory, together with a smaller house of five rooms. A pipe organ was installed in the chapel. Some attention was paid to the library holdings, which increased to 9,000 volumes by 1915. The library subscribed to some 15 religious journals, in addition to some church publications. We now have about 72,000 volumes in the library and we receive about 4,607 periodicals, most of them subscribed for.

Numerous lectures were delivered by more or less outstanding speakers during a given year. For example, in 1914-15 among the lecturers were Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Chancellor Henry A. Buchtel, Mr. C. C. Robinson, national secretary of the YMCA on Boys' Work, Livingston Farrand, on "Public Health and Social Service." There was an all day conference on Pastoral Work: among the vital topics was the Midweek Service, i.e., the Prayer meeting.

During this period the student body published an annual, called, for no apparent reason, the Book of Jashar. I gathered the following choice bits of information from these annuals and bulletins. The Rose Rall organization was founded in 1913 to minister to the intellectual and social life of its members, consisting of the wives of faculty and of students. Since a small proportion of the students in those days were married, the faculty wives may have out-numbered the students wives. Mention is made of a non-credit Browning class, which met once

a month. There was also a non-credit singing class. Miss Rilling, of the University of Denver, conducted a non-credit gymnasium class one hour a week. Captain ball was the favorite game. There were five minutes of special exercise on the gym floor at the ten-o'clock period between classes. This gymnasium break was described as being a helpful episode in the midst of the forenoon's hard work. This, of course, was before anyone had ever heard of the elbow exercise provided by our coffee breaks.

Chapel apparently was conducted three days a week. There was also a student fellowship on Fridays. Somewhere along the line the Iliff League, composed of students, was organized. The library was described as a place to visit. Examination week was called the Revival of Learning. There was a good deal of interest in the space age. In answer to a professor's question, "How far is the end of space?" a quick thinking student replied, "Which end?" Apparently the same professor inquired, "Mr. Kent, will you give a delination of space?" Kent replied, "I can't quite express it, but I have it in my head all right." Among the things easy to explain was the Methodist Hymnal. By this I see that in this area the students then were smarter than the present generation. Among the things difficult to explain was the unfolding of personality. At this point we seem to be better informed than they, for with the new psychology we know all about personality.

There was a gospel team of students available for evangelistic work. Professors, then as now, frequently preached in various churches gave series of lectures in Denver and elsewhere, and attended meetings of one kind or another. One faculty member kept the Central City church alive. They all helped with the program of the Denver Training School for Sunday School Workers. Sixteen students in 1915 had pastoral charges with a total of 1,088 members, which was increased by 25% in six months. One of the students took a church which the District Superintendent was planning to close up because of indifference and hostility, even, in the community. By Easter time some 25 persons were unable to get into the crowded church. Another student directed a playground in Denver with little or no financial aid. Some of the students were engaged in a housing investigation in cooperation with the city health department. In 1917 clinic work was established at selected churches to supplement class work. The churches were Trinity, Grace Warren, Epworth Institutional, and the Sunshine Mission on Skid Row.

In addition to pastoral work, which was not recommended for first-year students, there were "other opportunities for self-help for industrious and energetic students." One of these opportunities, we

learn from oral tradition, was to attempt to clean the statue of Isaac which had been badly blackened by the fire that all but destroyed the mansion in 1910.

The faculty of 1915-16 was distinctive. Harris Franklin Rall, President, taught systematic theology. Lindsay B. Longacre taught Old Testament and unrelated subjects. He designed the Iliff seal; he also wrote the words and music of Hail Alma Mater. Also, he was registrar, and made regular entries in what he called the Book of Life. William Jackson Lowstuter, who left shortly afterward for Boston, taught New Testament. Joseph Newton Rodeheaver was professor of religious pedagogy and public speaking. He apparently was low man on the totem pole, for he also was the librarian. Borden Bowne Kessler, who became a controversial figure, as did Dr. Longacre, by reason of his liberalism, was professor of practical theology.

An era was coming to an end. Bishop Warren had died in 1912, and Mrs. Warren died in 1920. Both of them had a great deal to do with founding of the school and with guiding and directing it. I have found no evidence that either, at any time, made any attempt whatever to restrict the academic freedom of either the faculty or the student body regardless of pressures that were exerted.

I shall close with an observation that may be of interest to those who are concerned with a doctrine of causation. Had the Wyoming Territory not passed a law instituting woman's suffrage, there would have been no Iliff School of Theology. At that time Mr. and Mrs. Iliff lived in Cheyenne, which was central to his cattle business. However, when Mrs. Iliff began to envision the dire prospect that not only would she be subject to jury duty, but also might have to serve on a jury with gamblers, bar tenders and dance hall girls, in order to please his wife, Mr. Iliff bought a home in Denver. Had they not come to Denver, she would have had no association with the University of Denver. Quite conceivably she would neither have met nor married Bishop Warren. Accordingly, the Wyoming legislature was in part responsible for The Iliff School of Theology.

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