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## Article Title: Nebraska College, the Episcopal School at Nebraska City, 1868-1885

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Article Summary: Like most of the church-related schools and colleges founded in new territories and states in the nineteenth century, Nebraska College struggled to attract students. Failure to gain financial and moral support led to its closing.

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Photographs / Images: sketch of Nebraska City by A E Matthews, 1865; Stephen Friel Nuckolls; Episcopal Bishop Robert H Clarkson

NEBRASKA COLLEGE,  
THE EPISCOPAL SCHOOL AT NEBRASKA CITY,  
1868-1885

By WILLIAM JOSEPH BARNDS

This article is a revision of a chapter in the author's recently published *Centennial History of the Episcopal Church in Nebraska*, written under the sponsorship of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska at Omaha.

**D**URING THE NINETEENTH century dozens of church-related schools and colleges were founded in the new territories and states being carved out of the upper Midwest. Some of them survived and are continuing their work of education today, but the majority closed after a few years of operation, never to reopen, due mainly to dwindling enrollment and financial vicissitudes. One of those which failed was an Episcopal Church school at Nebraska City, Nebraska, best known as Nebraska College although it at first bore the name of Talbot Hall.

The Episcopal General Convention, the church governing body which meets every three years, chose as bishop of Nebraska and Dakota in 1865 the Rev. Robert Harper Clarkson, rector of St. James' Church, Chicago. He moved to Nebraska City and purchased the property belonging to his predecessor, the Right Reverend Dr. Joseph Talbot, who had been transferred to the Episcopal Diocese of Indiana as bishop coadjutor. Bishop Talbot had served for six years in Nebraska

and the area designated by his church as "The Northwest," which included a number of states and territories in the upper Midwest. Bishop Clarkson, feeling his church needed an associate mission and a diocesan school for boys in Nebraska, decided to use the property at Nebraska City in an effort to meet the need.<sup>1</sup> An account of the early days of the college published in an Episcopal weekly newspaper, the *Church Journal*, tells of the ground-breaking ceremony of the first building on July 2, 1866. Upon its completion in October classes began. The plan which Bishop Clarkson envisioned was also explained:

The school is to be located near Nebraska City on the farm formerly occupied by Bishop Talbot, and now by Bishop Clarkson, and was named by the Bishop, "Talbot Hall" after his predecessor. In connection with the school there is to be an "Associate Mission of Clergy" for missionary work in the southern portion of Nebraska.<sup>2</sup>

In 1871 when the Midland Pacific Railroad completed its line from Nebraska City to Lincoln, it established a station called Talbot at the college. Its location was 2½ miles southwest of the railroad's downtown depot. Two east-bound and two west-bound trains stopped there daily.<sup>3</sup> A description of the nearby area was printed in the student newspaper, the *Last Day*, in 1869:

The College... occupies an elevated position that commands a view of the surrounding country... To the east lies Nebraska City, the Star of the West... the church spires glistening in the sun, the smoke ascending from foundaries and factories, and the almost daily appearance of a new edifice, are manifestations of the industry, stability, and enterprise of the inhabitants. Back of the city and on the opposite side of the [Missouri] river, rise the Iowa bluffs clothed with forests, at the foot of which runs the M.V.R.R. [railroad].<sup>4</sup>

Bishop Clarkson appointed his sister's husband, the Rev. John G. Gasmann, rector of the school, then appealed through Episcopal publications for \$10,000, an amount he felt adequate to inaugurate the new school and mission.<sup>5</sup> It was his contention that the Episcopal Church should have in connection with Talbot Hall an associate mission house and training school where unmarried clergy and candidates for holy orders (the ministry) could live. They were to instruct undergraduates while studying their own courses during the week and were to assist in preaching and lay reading on Sundays. The bishop reported that six candidates for holy

orders and a priest who was qualified to teach classes in theology had agreed to come to the mission as soon as housing and classrooms were provided. The bishop wrote:

What a great amount of work for Christ's blessed Church and for human souls, seven earnest men associated together in a common effort can accomplish in the present formative condition of society on the Frontier! \$5000 would build a plain and suitable "Mission House and Training School." We ought not to ask in vain for such a sum and such a purpose.<sup>6</sup>

Nebraska trustees of the school included some of the state's prominent men: John L. Redick and James M. Woolworth, Omaha; Julien Metcalf, Jasper A. Ware, J. Sterling Morton, John B. Bennet, Stephen F. Nuckolls, and Daniel H. Wheeler, Nebraska City.<sup>7</sup> And its student body must have included sons or relatives of prominent families, judging from the names of students on whom honors were bestowed at the closing exercises of the first term in July, 1867: In the still unfinished "St. Paul's Chapel" in a campus building, awards were presented the following students: William R. Nuckolls of Nebraska City, in mathematics and grammar; Joy Morton of Nebraska City, in declamation; Paul Morton of Nebraska City, in sacred studies; Arthur W. Furnas of Brownville, in reading; Byron Bennet of Nebraska City, in Greek; Robert Graff of Omaha, in composition. Byron Bennet also received the highest award, the Clarkson gold medal for deportment, which carried with it the accolade, "head of the school."<sup>8</sup>

The college was visited that term by a Chicago layman, perhaps a former parishioner of Bishop Clarkson, who reported on the growth of the school in the *Church Journal*. The school had opened with but three boys but had completed the first year with thirty students. Forty applications had been made for the next term, and that number, he forecast, would probably be increased to fifty. Auxiliary buildings were being constructed so that at least that number could be handled by Talbot Hall. An article in the April 1868 *Journal* said: "From a new and untried work, it has become firmly established, and to a stranger who knows nothing of its beginnings, it has the appearance of an old institution." During the summer of 1868 Talbot Hall became Nebraska College and Divinity School. The change in status and name took place on July 21, when Bishop Carlson presided at a

meeting of the incorporators of the school and transferred to them all the property that had been owned by Talbot Hall.<sup>9</sup> The new arrangement was described in an article in the *Church Journal*:

Talbot Hall has been incorporated into a College and named "Nebraska College and Divinity School." The Rev. John G. Gasmann was chosen President of the College, and the Rev. Robert W. Oliver, Dean of the Divinity School. The Collegiate building will continue to bear the name Talbot Hall. A splendid property with commodious buildings has already been acquired, and applications have been made for the admission of fifty students and several candidates for Orders the coming year.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to Gasmann and Oliver the faculty consisted of Bishop Clarkson as professor of pastoral theology and the Rev. Thomas May Thorp as professor of Latin and Greek. Ten students finally enrolled in the divinity school.<sup>11</sup>

The building in which theology was taught was purchased in Nebraska City from Colonel Ossemus H. Irish, whose home it had formerly been. It was given the name Schoenberger Hall in honor of a generous benefactor, John H. Schoenberger of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Financial support for the institution had also been received from John David Wolfe, a member of the domestic missions department of the Episcopal Church; from the Church of the Incarnation, Calvary Church, and St. Paul's Chapel of Trinity Church, all in New York City; from the Church of the Advent in Boston; and from St. Luke's Church in Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup>

The new school was immediately faced with local competition when coeducational Otoe University, a Presbyterian day school, opened on September 7, 1868, in the Outfit building of downtown Nebraska City. By 1869 Otoe had seventy-five or more students and advertised that it could accommodate 100. Nebraska College had places for fifty to sixty boys in its dormitory and could admit more day students; however, its attendance was only forty.<sup>13</sup> Comparative costs at each school were: \$280 for the school year of ten months for boarding students at Nebraska College, \$13.00 to \$15.00 per quarter for day scholars at Otoe University.<sup>14</sup>

Almost from its beginnings Nebraska College entered into athletics, fielding in 1868 the Gasmanns, a baseball team named after its professor-coach. At the state fair in Nebraska

City that year they "received a most complete and decided thrashing" from the state champion Otoes, 50-30, but later claimed a victory over the same team. Captain of the team was a student, William R. Nuckolls, who also led his teammates to other victories. In 1870 the Gasmanns defeated the Orientals twice, 32-24 and 31-24.<sup>15</sup>

Bishop Clarkson appealed to his own clergy to do all in their power to increase the patronage of Nebraska College and of its companion institution in Omaha, Brownell Hall, a school for girls. He stated: "There has been much indifference in this respect on the part of the clergy. The prosperity and welfare of these institutions should be as dear to you as that of your parish."<sup>16</sup> In a letter to the missionary magazine of the Episcopal Church, the *Spirit of Missions*, the Rev. James Paterson wrote:

I make Nebraska College my headquarters. This is a pet institution of Bishop Clarkson, and I have no doubt will in time repay all the fostering care he is now bestowing upon it. It is a Church boarding school for the training of boys and young men, either for commercial or for professional life, and a school for the education of candidates for the Ministry.<sup>17</sup>

In 1869 after President Gasmann resigned to become rector of Trinity Parish in Omaha, the presidency was held briefly by the Rev. Henry R. Pyne of Maryland. Upon the latter's retirement he was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. John McNamara of Wisconsin. Bishop Clarkson was convinced that because of the new president's vigor and his "high character and conceded qualifications, we [can] look forward to the continued prosperity and growing patronage of the College."<sup>18</sup> Drs. McNamara and Oliver and Bishop Clarkson appear to have been the key administrative personnel. Of these men, who also officiated at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Nebraska, Gertrude Metcalf Sholes, a parishioner, wrote this account:

In the long procession of clergy and prelates who officiated at St. Mary's, one who stands out most clearly is Dr. McNamara, small and merry, whose tilts with dear Bishop Clarkson in after dinner stories kept us in uproaring merriment for hours after we had finished our coffee. Both of them were gifted raconteurs, and many of their stories have become part of our family history. Bishop Clarkson, whose heavy, close-cut black beard and eyebrows made him look like a brigand though he was a saint, used to give us the best sermons that I ever heard at St. Mary's. . . . [A] kindness of heart made it hard for him to say "no" when a distressed wandering Doctor of Divinity in search of a parish came to him for help.



*Nebraska City, "the Star of the West," was an important river port on the Missouri at the time the Episcopalians established their college in 1866. This view of the river landing was sketched by A. E. Mathews in 1865.*

The result was that St. Mary's had more than one rector who brought drama into our parochial life.<sup>19</sup>

She also described Bishop Clarkson as a "sympathetic and delightful companion, full of humor."<sup>20</sup> The key person in the divinity school was Dr. Oliver. He believed that the divinity school was an absolute necessity for the Episcopal Church in Nebraska, that Nebraska parishes could provide enough young men to serve its churches, and that the school could educate them for less than one-third the cost of sending them to Eastern seminaries. They could become missionaries to small congregations, he felt, even before they completed their theological training.<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Oliver's plan for the divinity school covered six days of the week: Monday, Hebrew grammar; Tuesday, Greek, exegesis; Wednesday, Hebrew literature; Thursday, ecclesiastical history; Friday, systematic theology; and Saturday, delivery of sermons. Each student was to attend school for five years, with each term divided to allow him to teach during the nine-month college term and to use the other three months to concentrate exclusively upon his theological studies.<sup>22</sup> He emphasized that the plan of theological instruction was not "to interfere with the older and more powerful institutions of the Episcopal Church" but to co-operate with them and especially to furnish "men of sound theological views" for the ministry. They were to be men "intelligently attached to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as manifestly laid down in her Creeds, Rubrics, and Canons, and who hate all innovations."<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Oliver himself gave to the college an international complexion. He had attained a liberal education in Britain, then served in its army in Scotland before being ordered to Canada. His next army assignment was that of an attache to the United States while serving with the Canadian forces. He remained in America, entered the Presbyterian ministry and held pastorates in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia from 1843 to 1854. He became an Episcopal clergyman in 1855 and served in the Union forces during the Civil War. On March 21, 1865, he was named the first chancellor of the University of Kansas



*Stephen Friel Nuckolls,  
prominent Nebraska Citizen,  
enthusiastically backed Nebraska  
College. Nuckolls County,  
Nebraska, is named for him.*

at Lawrence, but moved to Nebraska College to organize the divinity school. Although the elaborate plans of the bishop and Dr. Oliver did not materialize as they had hoped, he remained on the faculty until 1881. He was dean and financial agent of Nebraska College as well as archdeacon of the Diocese of Nebraska.<sup>24</sup> The divinity school had three students in 1869, five in 1870, and six in 1871.<sup>25</sup>

Bishop Clarkson made one of his periodic inspections of the college on April 24, 1871, and reported to church superiors his satisfaction with the progress it had made in two years:

Everything is progressing finely. The work of the institution is in all respects satisfactory and gratifying. No one could be better fitted than the wise cheerful, laborious and faithful President [McNamara]; the under teachers are all competent and zealous; among the patrons of the school are some of the foremost citizens of the state; four of the students are preparing for the Holy Ministry; and though without endowment, and depending for its support only upon the precarious patronage of the community, the College is nevertheless out of debt and self-sustaining.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the bishop's stated optimism, the college must not have been entirely satisfied with its position, either geographical or financial. In the fall of 1871 the Rev. James Paterson, secretary of the college, revealed that a nearby town had put out feelers designed to lure the school away from Nebraska City. The *News*, of which Thomas Morton was proprietor and Dr. J. H. Blue, editor, laid the prospect of losing the school before its readers:

Bellevue offers to move the college there, give ten acres of beautiful land . . . and \$7,000 in bonds; and . . . the people are subscribing to raise the amount of \$2,000. The present College site and lands and Schoenberger Hall will sell for \$20 or \$25,000. Had we better save this? Had we not better secure a plot of ground on Greggspport Heights and add a few thousand dollars to it [rather than] to lose so important an institution?<sup>27</sup>

By January, 1872, the college must have given an affirmative answer to its offer. Morton acknowledged it bitterly in his editorial column, and headed it "What Constitutes Society?"

Like a personal loss we feel the announcement that the trustees of Nebraska College have accepted the proposition of Bellevue. . . . It is now worth \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year to this city; and if it goes away, it will take this much from our citizens. . . . What is building at Peru? The Normal school. What makes Lincoln famous? The University. What educators have we when Dr. McNamara and his able corps leave us? We have saloons!<sup>28</sup>

In addition to Nebraska University at Lincoln, Peru Normal, and Otoe University, the Episcopalians were also competing for students with other Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri colleges, many of which advertised in the *Nebraska City News*. A commercial school in the city also posed enough of a threat to Nebraska College to cause student editors of the *Last Day* to editorialize against business "colleges," labeling them "cheap [and] inferior." The business school promoter, a Professor Murphy, had allied himself with the McCann Bank in starting the school and circulating several 4,000-run issues of a paper called the *Collegiate Advocate*, whose purpose was to lure students away from academic institutions.<sup>29</sup>

Nebraska City civic leaders some time before spring obviously decided to counter the Bellevue offer with one of its own, which was accepted. On June 15, 1872, the *News* reported that the main building of Otoe University, the Outfit, and other of its installations on 13th, 14th and on Sioux Street had been purchased by the trustees of

Nebraska College. Ground was broken on Sioux Street for Nuckolls Hall, a two-story brick structure to be started immediately. "Let our generous citizens see to it that the work shall not be impeded for the lack of funds," the *News* warned editorially. Talbot Hall and other buildings on the abandoned campus southwest of town were offered for sale. The new downtown plant, which was estimated to be worth \$15,000 on its completion in November, 1872, consisted of the following buildings: (1) new Nuckolls Hall with basement dining room; first floor reception room, guest rooms, administration offices; second floor infirmary, professors' rooms; (2) Outfit Building, newly refurbished, with basement gymnasium, student utility rooms; first floor classrooms and library; second floor chapel and dormitory to accommodate thirty boys; (3) two small buildings for additional dormitory space.<sup>30</sup> Nuckolls Hall was named for Stephen Friel Nuckolls, largest contributor to the erection fund and a generous friend of the college, though not a churchman. The next year Outfit Hall was renovated and renamed Muhlenberg Hall after a Miss Muhlenberg of New York City, who had borne the expense of its remodeling.<sup>31</sup>

School authorities described discipline at the college as "thorough" and "efficient." They pointed out that "when off duty, students have to attend roll call every 45 minutes. And they are never out of the custody of some officer of the school, night or day, except by special permit. . . . For it is a sad fact that too often college boys commit depredations on other dwellers in the vicinity." Economy was emphasized and "no extravagance allowed and nothing permitted to go to waste." The \$280 yearly charge for boarding students included everything except books, clothing, and incidentals. Day students were charged \$5 a month. The college library included 1,500 volumes, which were augmented by loans from several other city libraries, public and private. Yearly prizes were offered in seven fields, including "one for personal neatness and one for deportment." A grammar school department had also been added to the curriculum.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of the school year in July, 1873, the college issued a report which stated the campus was "fenced in and

presented a compact, commodious and pleasing appearance, with ample accommodations for fifty or more boarders and any reasonable number of day scholars." Sixty-eight students had been enrolled during the session just ended. Degrees granted were Bachelor of Science, one; Bachelor of Arts, one; Master of Arts, two; and Doctor of Divinity, two. The report asserted: "No better staff of educators can be found anywhere East or West than the professors of Nebraska College, as these best able to judge can testify."

Total enrollment in 1872-1873 was seventy-two, with fifty-two in the English, German, scientific, and commercial departments; twelve in the classical department; and four in theology. Students were enrolled from Nebraska, Kentucky, Wisconsin, New York, Dakota, and Wyoming. Two were Indians, Charles Cook and Oliver Kimball, who had been recruited when Nebraska College became self-sustaining despite competition from such nearby schools as Peru Normal, which had over 200 students enrolled.<sup>33</sup> President McNamara added to the staff two local men, Aurelius Bowen, M.D., who taught physiology and hygiene; and S. S. Morehouse, a lawyer, who taught contracts and commercial law.<sup>34</sup>

At the companion Episcopal academy, Schoenberger Hall for girls, which was founded in 1872 by Dr. Oliver, two sessions, each twenty weeks in length, were offered. (The Hall had originally housed the seminary.) The first session included higher English, Latin, and drawing at \$20 per session for day students; the second, a lesser offering at \$12 per session. There were other courses of varying degrees of difficulty and at different rates to appeal to other educational tastes. Schoenberger Hall had competition on Kearney Heights in the Catholic Academy of the Annunciation for girls, which had been founded in 1870.<sup>35</sup>

President McNamara spent the summer of 1874 traveling in Europe and the following winter he was in demand in Nebraska City as a speaker. One of his talks was entitled, "The Affairs and Society of Europe," which he delivered before benefit church and school groups without charge for his services.<sup>36</sup> Nebraska College probably reached its peak in prestige and success that year; then abruptly President

McNamara resigned. An article in the *Church Journal* announcing his resignation included this assessment of his administration by his superiors:

[The resignation] was accepted with expressions of regret and great regard; and from the financial reports presented, it appeared that he had managed the affairs of the Institution with fidelity and good judgment, and much toil, leaving its pecuniary condition in a very satisfactory state. . . . During the present year [of locust infestation] the College has fully paid its expense.<sup>37</sup>

In late April the city feted the president in a "Farewell to Dr. McNamara" dinner held at the Barnum House. Attending were church, school, and civic leaders who lauded their guest with "brilliant speeches." Soon afterward Dr. McNamara left for a new assignment in St. Johnsville, New York.<sup>38</sup>

The decline of Nebraska College began with the interim regime of Professor P. L. Woodbury, who was elevated from his post as mathematics teacher, though the school survived almost another decade. The *Church Journal* reiterated that the college had been "doing admirably," but the glowing reports made about the school and its sixty students tended to be more of a promotional than of a factual nature. News coverage of its activities by the local press also grew more infrequent. In the late 1870's a financial depression crippled much of the Episcopal Church work throughout the nation. Funds from Chicago were virtually cut off following its disastrous fire, and Bishop Clarkson could no longer tap the resources of his former parishioners there. Most often his efforts to promote the church schools were unavailing, and funds from student sources alone were not sufficient to keep the programs in a healthy condition.<sup>39</sup>

The administration of Professor Woodbury, an 1864 graduate of Dartmouth University, still presented an outward appearance of vigor. On his staff were the Rev. H. A. Remick, the first graduate of Nebraska College to return as an instructor; the Rev. H. B. Burgess of Michigan University; the Rev. T. V. Wilson; and a teacher of German, Miss Annie Irish, daughter of Colonel Irish, local civic leader. She was the first woman to be added to the teaching corps. The *Church Guardian* also reported expansively on the two diocesan schools, which, it said, "are growing in public favor and never were so well fitted as they are now for imparting sound

moral, religious, and intellectual training to all who may be entrusted to them for that purpose."<sup>40</sup>

In the fall of 1875 President Woodbury issued advertising which listed his institution as "Nebraska College and Grammar School," which "thoroughly fitted young men for business or college." An attempt was being made to appeal to boys below college age and also to young men who did not aspire to a classical education.<sup>41</sup> After two years as president Dr. Woodbury was replaced by Canon Henry C. Shaw on July 25, 1877. The *Church Guardian* gave him an enthusiastic build-up, but he served only a year.<sup>42</sup> One reason the college administrators had such difficulty in appealing to local students of limited financial means was the "tuition free" education offered by the nearby state schools following the 1874-1875 term.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps seeing that tax-supported schools were the wave of the future, Nebraska City business and civic leaders attempted to exploit an impasse between Lincoln and its state university over a building program. J. Sterling Morton, spokesman for Nebraska City, recalled that "our businessmen have given \$100 to \$250 each to retain Nebraska College" and felt confident they would subscribe \$50,000 to \$60,000 and grant a sixty-acre site if the state university would re-locate in Nebraska City. Morton observed that it was more important for the growth of a city that it have a state-supported university than to have a railroad or even be designated as the state capital. Lincoln and its university resolved their differences and the opportunity vanished.<sup>44</sup>

Bishop Clarkson, disturbed by the lack of appreciation shown by church members for Brownell Hall and Nebraska College, defended denominational education, insisting that "in every respect these schools today are not a whit behind any schools of this kind in the country." However, commencement exercises in the spring of 1878 at the end of President Shaw's first term as president hardly bore out the bishop's statement. Most of the graduates were at the preparatory school level and their performances at the event, though probably competent, reflected their youth. Top college graduates that year were John Steinhart, who received an award for

excellence in "rhetoric elocution," and R. H. Howe who received the Nuckolls medal for achievement in mathematics.<sup>45</sup>

On June 30, 1878, most of the responsibility for the administration of the college was removed from the Episcopal Church by the trustees. An advertisement running for several issues in the *Nebraska City News* set forth its provisions:

The Trustees of Nebraska College have leased the buildings, furniture, and good will of the College to the Rev. Thomas E. Dickey for a term of years.

Mr. Dickey is a gentleman of culture and experience and thoroughly qualified to conduct a first class institution. He will manage the entire affairs of the College as a private undertaking of his own, and the Trustees commend the school to friends of education. . . . The Trustees will not be responsible in any way except to see that the Institution will . . . educate its pupils in a satisfactory manner.

For the Board of Trustees

ROBERT H. CLARKSON

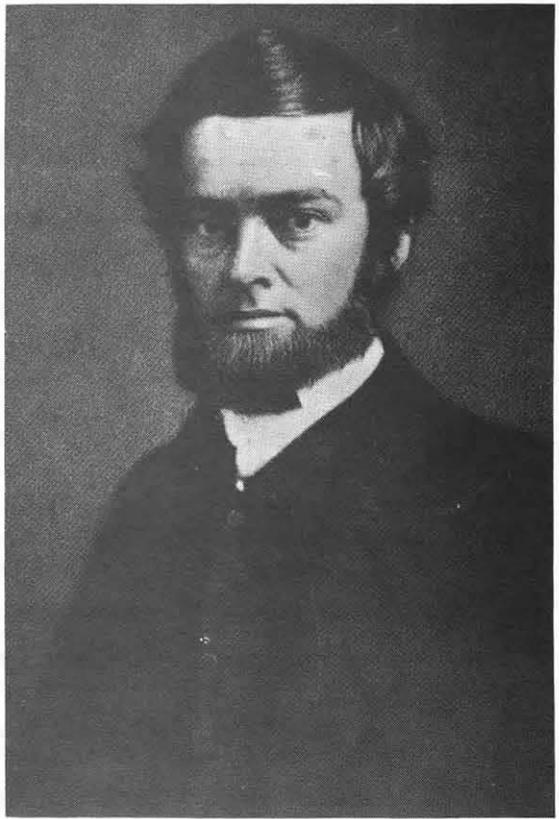
President of the Board

June 30, 1878

The fall term enrollment totaled forty-five boys, President Dickey reported, for whom everything possible was being done to "improve their comfort, happiness, and training," and the yearly tuition charge had been reduced from \$280 to \$250.

While the Episcopal Church appeared to be out of the picture, its publications continued to call the attention of church members to the "well ordered and well appointed" school and felt it unnecessary for Nebraska parents, at least, to look elsewhere for higher education.<sup>46</sup>

The trustees in July of 1879 described the prospects for the next term as encouraging and found its administrative affairs "in a most satisfactory condition." In typical Chamber of Commerce language they described the professors as "first class brain cultivators, and Christian gentlemen to boot, who do their duty thoroughly in their several departments." As classes began in September the *News* printed the entire roll of students, the first time it had done so since the school was founded, "in order to show that the institution is well appreciated at home." Enrollment had increased over the preceding term and now totaled 68 including fifteen boarders and forty-three day scholars. One Nebraska Citian, Carl Morton, attended as a boarder. Among the day students were



*Episcopal Church Bishop  
Robert H. Clarkson  
founded Nebraska College  
in 1866.*

Willie Sweet, Otoe Morton, and Lee Steinhart. Church appeals for students from out-state Nebraska and nearby areas seemed to have had some effect, but most boarding students came from far afield: Austin, Minnesota; St. Joseph, Missouri; New York City; Sioux Falls and Swan Lake, Dakota; Farragut and Council Bluffs, Iowa; Omaha, Fremont, Sidney, and Cottonwood Springs, Nebraska. It might be pointed out that Nebraska City high school students, both boys and girls, numbered but 41 in 1879.<sup>47</sup>

At Schoenberger Hall where Dr. Oliver still held forth as "visitor," young ladies "of any age and grade" were solicited for its day school courses in advertising in the local press. Mrs. Philip Potter, its principal in 1878, was succeeded by Miss Florence Seymour and Mrs. Wilson Smith in 1880, as emphasis on educating girls became more pronounced. Twenty-nine girls and six small boys attended during the 1879-1880 term. That year, when attempts to integrate colored students into the white Nebraska City public schools were made, opposition arose among both Negro and white parents. "Nearly all colored people" signed a petition

addressed to the school board asking for continuation of their school but pleading for a "due proportion of the public school funds." Dr. Oliver, learning of the controversy, offered assistance. He placed at the disposal of the board a building known as "St. Augustine [chapel] free of all demands as long as it may be used for the separate education of the colored people." The chapel had been used for Episcopal Church functions and as a "nucleus for the divinity school of Nebraska College."<sup>48</sup>

Reaffirming its interest in Nebraska City's "home institution of higher learning," the editor of the *News* was perhaps overly optimistic about the school in April of 1880:

The Nebraska City College has never been for the past ten years in a more prosperous condition. . . . Rooms in the dormitories have been taken up by occupants and the main building occupied by the faculty encroached upon. . . . Though the college is at present commencing to reap the merit and approval it deserves, it is not as yet in such a financial condition as to allow . . . the building of a new wing. . . . Our city looks upon the college as one of its home institutions that she can point out to the stranger . . .<sup>49</sup>

President Dickey's hope that growth would continue was apparently unrealized, and in 1882 he severed his connection with the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska to enter other educational work in "the Northwest." In 1883 Dr. McNamara was lured from the East to resume his former position as head of the school, and for awhile it appeared that he would be able to restore the college to the position to which he had built it a few years previously. The *Guardian* gave Dr. McNamara strong support in its news columns and reported he had instituted religious education twice daily in the school chapel. During Lent, students met to call attention in brief extemporaneous talks to "the urgency of Christ the Lord and submission to His Commands."<sup>50</sup>

Members of the board of trustees who "unanimously elected Dr. McNamara rector of the college" included Bishop Clarkson and Dean Millspaugh of Omaha; Milan H. Sessions, Lincoln; the Rev. T. O'Connell, Fremont; J. Sterling Morton, Julian Metcalf, Rollin Milton Rolfe, James Sweet, William Bischof, Dr. Oliver, and Professor P. L. Woodbury, all of Nebraska City. They resolved to build a new dormitory on the ground occupied by the two small frame buildings on the college campus, but the project was never completed.<sup>51</sup> The

trio of clergy who had worked together for so many years, President McNamara, Dr. Oliver, and Bishop Clarkson, was soon to break up.

In September of 1883, Dr. Oliver became the archdeacon of the Diocese of Nebraska with headquarters in Kearney. In March of 1884, Bishop Clarkson died, and later in the year, President McNamara resigned from the college for the second time. Only three diplomas were granted at the end of the spring semester of 1884, two in business and one in college preparatory disciplines. An attempt was made in mid-summer by the trustees to preserve the school by transferring it to Lincoln, even though the state university was there. Bishop Clarkson had on occasion considered it, believing that Lincoln's growing population would ensure Nebraska College an enrollment at a satisfactory level.<sup>52</sup> A correspondent of the *Churchman* wrote: "In the present condition of [school] affairs the loss of Dr. McNamara might easily prove the end of the enterprise of many prayers and much self-denial." The prophecy was soon to be realized. On September 6, just before school began, his resignation was announced and his replacement, the Rev. M. F. Carey of Falls City, named.<sup>53</sup>

On September 16, 1884, Nebraska College opened for its final year under President Carey, a graduate of the University of Dublin. In its nineteenth year its broadened program included four departments: primary, intermediate, college preparatory, and collegiate, as well as an adjunctive commercial department. Obviously hoping to appeal to a wider age group, the school had extended its offerings below the academy level. It now held up as an objective the development of "the mental faculties of the pupils" while presenting academic pursuits to them as pleasurable and eliminating "boresome" procedures. The pupils were to be fitted for the practical duties of life as well. Discipline would be inculcated and maintained by firmness combined with gentleness of treatment. Pupils who desired it could enroll in the more scholarly courses which would prepare them to enter "any class in any college or university in the United States or Europe."<sup>54</sup>

These innovative plans, however, did nothing to revive the troubled institution, and on April 12, 1885, "the school

closed and a committee appointed to sell the property, and liquidate indebtedness." Bishop Clarkson's successor, Bishop George Worthington, explained the closing to the Diocesan Council: "At a meeting of the Board of the Nebraska College, April 21st, 1885, it was very evident that the institution must be closed. The exhibit of assets and liabilities revealed the fact that upon any known principle of business honesty there was no possibility of maintaining it."<sup>55</sup>

The *News* in writing an epitaph for the defunct school commented:

We doubt if there is a citizen of Nebraska City who does not sincerely regret the loss we have sustained in the closing of Nebraska College. It was an institution that has always been referred to with pride by our citizens who never failed to give it assistance when requested. . . . From what we can learn, it is the intention of Bishop Worthington to found a boys' school somewhere in the diocese, and the town bidding the highest will secure the prize. Nebraska City has a strong claim upon the school. . . . It is something that was ours and was not lost by any fault of our people. Bishop Worthington should give us the school.<sup>56</sup>

There were more reasons for the closing than finances. The breaking up of the Oliver-McNamara-Clarkson trio affected both the administration and morale of the school. The continued growth of the university at Lincoln, which drew away some of the more able students, was a contributing factor. The failure of both the Episcopal clergy and laity to encourage young men to attend their denomination's college meant that many promising students never found their way to Nebraska College, though it must be noted, due primarily to geographic settlement patterns, the Episcopal Church was not numerically one of the predominant churches in early Nebraska. Finally, as the buildings aged and were used more, additional funds were required for maintenance.

But Nebraska City was not the only place where colleges flourished for a while and then closed their doors. A history by Jack Richardson of another Episcopal School, "Kemper College of [Boonville] Missouri," discusses the factors contributing to the closing of colleges in the nineteenth century. Richards wrote of Kemper College:

Minor reasons can be cited as contributing to the collapse of the college, such as mismanagement, quarrels within the faculty, disagreement among the directors, opposition from other denominations, malicious rumors, and Bishop Kemper's loss of jurisdiction over the college. In tracing the history of Kemper College, two

reasons for failure became apparent: lack of adequate financial support, and incompetent management.<sup>57</sup>

Bishop Jackson Kemper had to rely on inexperienced men who gained knowledge of management only at the expense of the school, and possibly this was true to some degree of Bishop Clarkson and the management of Nebraska College. Richardson also observed:

Had the College [Kemper] had the full backing of the entire Episcopal Church, and had it been considered a missionary effort worthy of unqualified support, it might have weathered the storm and settled down to smooth sailing, rather than foundering on the rocks as it did.<sup>58</sup>

The problem of securing both financial and moral support for Episcopal schools in the nineteenth century was almost universal. Failure to gain such support contributed to the closing of Nebraska College, as well as other Episcopal schools. Richardson's closing remarks are not irrelevant to the situation of Nebraska College:

In the haste to establish institutions to provide education and train clergy for the West, men were repeatedly faced with failure because of their inability to procure adequate capital and necessary experience. Failure was common, but often it provided experience that offered an incentive to try again. As it was with Kemper College, its failure had little effect on the development of the West, for, in its dying wake, other Episcopal institutions arose which became permanently established, and which sent forth sons to disseminate their belief throughout the great valley of the Mississippi.<sup>59</sup>

Bishop Worthington's attitude about the closing of the school was expressed in an address to the Diocesan Council:

It has had days of prosperity and adversity, but many young men, and not a few in Holy Orders will feel a lasting debt of gratitude to this institution of Christian learning by means of which they were prepared for that station in which their life work was to be accomplished.<sup>60</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *Spirit of Missions*, New York, 1866, 53. Monthly magazine of the Episcopal Church dealing with domestic and foreign missions.

2. *Church Journal*, New York, August 1, 1886, 227.

3. *Nebraska City News*, July 15, 29, 1871.

4. *Last Day*, Nebraska College newspaper, July 7, 1869. This apparently was an occasional sheet, perhaps once-a-year. Student editors S. P. Davis and W. R. Ross issued a sprightly, humorous, well-written paper in 4-column, 12-inch, 4-page format.

5. *Church Journal*, August 29, 1866, 259.
6. *Ibid.*, April 24, 1867, 115.
7. *Nebraska City News*, July 20, 1868.
8. *Ibid.*, July 27, 1867.
9. *Church Journal*, April 15, 1868, 106; August 12, 1868, 243.
10. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1868, 251; *Nebraska City News*, August 31, 1868.
11. Statistical section of *General Convention Journal* of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1868.
12. *Episcopal Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1869, 14; *Nebraska City News*, July 6, 1872.
13. *Nebraska City News*, August 24, 1868; March 4, 1869; September 20, 1869; December 21, 1869.
14. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1868, July 17, 26, 1869; the Outfit had originally been one of the Russell, Majors and Waddell buildings.
15. *Last Day*, July 7, 1869; *Nebraska City News*, May 17, 1870.
16. *Episcopal Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1869, 14; *Nebraska City News*, December 20, 1869; February 7, 1870; May 13, 1871. Brownell Hall enrolled sixty students in 1871, of whom twenty were boarders. The "income of the school . . . exceeds expenses," the *News* said.
17. *Spirit of Missions*, 1870, 144-145.
18. *Episcopal Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1870, 32.
19. *Western Nebraska Churchman* of the Episcopal Church (Hastings, 1933), 16.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Church Journal*, August 10, 1876, 501.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1872, 25.
24. R. E. Dale, "Otoe County Pioneers, 1854-1870," manuscript, Nebraska State Historical Society, 1941.
25. *General Convention Journal* of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1871, 252.
26. *Spirit of Missions*, 1872, 252.
27. *Nebraska City News*, September 30, 1871.
28. *Ibid.*, January 6, 1872.
29. *Ibid.*, April 17, 1871.
30. *Ibid.*, June 15, November 16, 1872.
31. *Board of Mission Reports* of the Episcopal Church, 1873, 83; *Spirit of Missions*, 1872, 515; *Nebraska City News*, June 15, 1872.
32. *Nebraska City News*, November 16, 1872.
33. *Church Journal*, July 24, 1873, 468; *Nebraska City News*, July 5, 19, August 3, 1873.
34. *Ibid.*, August 3, 1873.
35. *Ibid.*, July 6, 1872, September 13, 1873, April 4, 1874.
36. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1874, January 30, 1875, February 13, 1875.
37. *Church Journal*, May 6, 1875, 273.
38. *Ibid.*; *Nebraska City News*, May 1, 1875.
39. *Church Journal*, February 3, 1876, 70.
40. *Nebraska City News*, May 22, 1875; *Church Guardian*, July 15, 1877, 69. Official publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska.
41. *Nebraska City News*, September 11, 1875.
42. *Church Guardian*, July 15, 1877, 69.

43. *Nebraska City News*, August 29, 1874.
44. *Ibid.*, July 14, 21, 1877.
45. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1878, 44; *Nebraska City News*, June 29, 1878.
46. *Church Guardian*, November 15, 1878, 71; *Nebraska City News*, July 13, 1878, August 3, 1878.
47. *Church Guardian*, July 15, 1879, 12, September 15, 1879, 40; *Nebraska City News*, September 20, 1879.
48. *Church Guardian*, April 15, 1882, 100; *Nebraska City News*, August 31, 1878, September 27, 1879, November 2, 1879, July 24, 1880; Andreas, 1210.
49. *Ibid.*, April 17, 1880
50. *Church Guardian*, August 15, 1882, 168; June 15, 1883, 138.
51. *Nebraska City News*, April 1, 1882.
52. *Ibid.*, April 1, 1882, June 7, 1884, August 2, 1884.
53. *The Churchman*, September 6, 1884, 262.
54. *Church Guardian*, October 15, 1884, 6-7; *Nebraska City News*, September 6, 1884.
55. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1885, 50-51; *Nebraska City News*, April 25, 1885.
56. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1885.
57. Jack Richardson, "Kemper College of [Boonville] Missouri," *Historical Magazine of the Episcopal Church*, XXX, June, 1961, 111 ff.
58. *Ibid.*, 125.
59. *Ibid.*, 126.
60. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1885, 51.