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The Legacy of Charles Henry Huber, Class of 1892: A Half Century of Service to Gettysburg College

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The Legacy of Charles Henry Huber, Class of 1892: A Half Century of Service to Gettysburg College

Description

In the common room of Huber Hall, there hangs high on the wall a dingy looking portrait of an older gentleman, dressed in a dark suit with round-framed glasses and graying hair. Beneath this portrait framed in faded gold is a small, tarnished, black plaque that gives a name to this curious looking man and briefly describes some of his accomplishments. From this portrait located above a small television, the Reverend Charles Henry Huber looks out over what used to be the lobby of the Gettysburg Academy, which was housed in a building where he spent much of his professional life; a building that would one day take on his name. Looking out into the common room of what has been transformed into a first year residence hall, "Huber" can see many of the changes that have come to his building and the college where he spent much of his life. Where a grand piano once stood toward the end of his time at the Academy, two rarely used foosball tables now sit; where a brick fireplace once housed its fair share of crackling fires on a snowy day, the metal doors to an elevator now open and close on a daily basis. Students who once crowded around the fireplace to listen to a radio broadcast now crowd around a television to watch new episodes of Grey's Anatomy and other popular TV. shows. From his retirement in 1940 to his death in 1951, and for many years after, Huber's portrait has seen many changes to both Huber all and the students who now live there from his portrait on the wall. The story of his half century of service to the college remains the same, although there are few people who could tell even a portion of it today. [*excerpt*]

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- Course Title: *HIST 300: Historical Method*
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- Course Instructor: Dr. Michael J. Birkner '72

Hidden in Plain Sight is a collection of student papers on objects that are "hidden in plain sight" around the Gettysburg College campus. Topics range from the Glatfelter Hall gargoyles to the statue of Eisenhower and from historical markers to athletic accomplishments. You can download the paper in pdf format and click "View Photo" to see the image in greater detail.

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Huber Hall, Charles H. Huber, Gettysburg Academy

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Hidden in Plain Sight

The Legacy of Charles Henry Huber, Class of 1892:
A Half Century of Service to Gettysburg College

History 300

Historical Methods

Dr. Michael Birkner

By

Alex Ferraro

Spring 2010



In the common room of Huber Hall, there hangs high on the wall a dingy looking portrait of an older gentleman, dressed in a dark suit with round-framed glasses and graying hair. Beneath this portrait framed in faded gold is a small, tarnished, black plaque that gives a name to this curious looking man and briefly describes some of his accomplishments. From this portrait located above a small television, the Reverend Charles Henry Huber looks out over what used to be the lobby of the Gettysburg Academy, which was housed in a building where he spent much of his professional life; a building that would one day take on his name. Looking out into the common room of what has been transformed into a first year residence hall, “Huber” can see many of the changes that have come to his building and the college where he spent much of his life. Where a grand piano once stood toward the end of this time at the Academy, two rarely used foosball tables now sit; where a brick fireplace once housed its fair share of crackling fires on a snowy day, the metal doors to an elevator now open and close on a daily basis.¹ Students who once crowded around the fireplace to listen to a radio broadcast now crowd around a television to watch new episodes of *Grey’s Anatomy* and other popular T.V. shows. From his retirement in 1940 to his death in 1951, and for many years after, Huber’s portrait has seen many changes to both Huber all and the students who now live there from his portrait on the wall. The story of his half century of service to the college remains the same, although there are few people who could tell even a portion of it today.

Not surprisingly, even those who spend a year or more of their time at Gettysburg College living in Huber Hall know next to nothing about the man for whom their home is named. When asked about what they know of Charles Huber, responses may range from nothing at all to

1. Michael Birkner, *Gettysburg College* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 64. Photograph of the lobby of the Gettysburg Academy, now known as the Huber Hall common room, from around 1930.

an honest, “isn’t he the guy who hangs above the T.V. downstairs.”² Little of Charles Huber is known even to the residence life staff member who opens her door every morning to see his stern face and the plaque beneath that offers just a glimpse into the story of Huber, his decades of service to Gettysburg College and the Gettysburg Academy that for many years was housed in the building that now bears his name.³

This building, now known as Huber Hall and once known as the “Main Building” [of the Gettysburg Academy], has one of the most varied uses of any building currently in use at Gettysburg College. By the time that the trustees had begun planning to construct a better home for the preparatory department to replace Stevens Hall, Huber had already been serving as Principal of the preparatory department for close to 15 years, a role that led him to play a major role in the initial impetus to construct the building. Charles Glatfelter, author of a comprehensive history of Gettysburg College, writes of the impact Huber had on this decision: “it is a tribute to the hold of the preparatory department on the minds of the trustees as well as to the influence which Huber had gained among them that, when only about ½ of the needed funds were raised, the one building which they chose to construct was Huber Hall.”⁴ Upon its completion and opening in 1916, the Main Building, as it was known, looked very different from the building it has come to be today. The south end of the basement floor was used for two classrooms, while the north end of the floor was used as a refrigerator room and storage areas for the food products, which could be transported to the kitchen on the main floor by a dumbwaiter in the northwestern corner of the building.⁵ Also in the basement were a number of student

2. Emma Sheffer, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, February 12, 2010.

3. Dawn Grashorn, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, February 12, 2010.

4. Charles Glatfelter, *A Salutory Influence: Gettysburg College, 1832-1985* (Mechanicsburg, PA: W & M Printing, 1987), 532.

5. Floor plans for Huber Hall, August 4, 1915, George C. Baum Architects in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Accessed in the Gettysburg College Office of Facilities Services.

residence rooms and a locker room/bathroom combination.⁶ On the southwest end of the main floor was a small entryway from the stairwell, a coatroom, and a set of three different sized rooms with a small washroom and closet connected to the large corner room that was used as an office, presumably for Headmaster Huber.⁷ The kitchen and dining room were on the north end of the building, and the lobby in the center contained two small rooms filled with bookcases centered between a large brick fireplace.⁸ A renovation in 1956 saw the conversion of the kitchen and dining room space into student rooms as well as some major alterations to the internal structure of the building.⁹ Another renovation in 2000 brought Huber Hall to its current configuration, eliminating the offices in the southwest corner of the building and converting them into a full apartment for one of the college's professional staff, changing the brick fireplace to an elevator and modernizing the bathrooms and student rooms throughout the building. Thus, in the course of a century, Huber Hall has gone from the home to a preparatory school to the college's dining facility to a residence hall for first year students.

The relationship between the Huber family and Gettysburg College began long before Charles Huber was hired as principal of the preparatory department in 1896. It begins with his father, the Reverend Eli Huber. The senior Rev. Huber graduated from what was then Pennsylvania College in 1855, returning to his alma mater several years later to serve on the college's faculty. Upon his return to Gettysburg, Eli Huber became the first Chaplain of the College and Amanda Rupert Strong Professor of English Bible in April of 1892.¹⁰ Four years prior, on a rainy spring day in April of 1888, sixteen year old Charles Henry Huber entered the

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Floor plans for Huber Hall, September 14, 1956 by Alfred J. Hamme, York, Pennsylvania. Accessed in the Gettysburg College of Facilities Services.

10. Glatfelter, *A Statutory Influence*, 237.

now defunct preparatory department of Pennsylvania College, with his father Eli Huber bringing him “just as his father had brought him at the same age by horse and carriage in 1850.”¹¹ As a sophomore, young Charles and the students of Pennsylvania College adopted orange and blue as the official school colors. This was not because orange and blue held special meaning for the college or even its surroundings. Rather, in Huber’s words years later, a “bright salesman, however suggested that it might be easier and quicker to change our colors to something ‘in stock’ and delicately hinted that Orange and Blue was a pretty combination and could be had.”¹²

The 1892 edition of *The Spectrum*, Pennsylvania College’s yearbook, lists Charles’s height at 5’9”, his weight at 135 pounds, and of course, his hat size of 7.¹³ Interestingly enough, this same table of statistics for the junior class also listed Huber’s future profession as “in doubt.”¹⁴ That same year, his junior year at the college, Charles won first honors in the Junior Oratorical contest between the two literary societies in a speech titled: “the power and influence of eloquence.”¹⁵ During his senior year, Charles was also a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, Vice President of the Philomathian Literary Society, Quarterback of the football team, and Assistant Editor of *The Spectrum*.¹⁶ Like countless students who would follow him, young Charles Huber excelled in a number of areas as a student; a student who would in a just a few years return, like his father, to his alma mater to begin a long and fruitful career of shaping the young men (and eventually women) who came to Gettysburg in search of an education.

11. Anna Jane Moyer, *To Waken Fond Memory: Moments in the History of Gettysburg College* (Gettysburg, PA: Friends of Musselman Library, 2006), 77.

12. Samuel Gring Hefelbower, *The History of Gettysburg College, 1832-1932* (York, PA: The Maple Press Company, 1932), 439.

13. *1892 Spectrum*, 29. This edition of *The Spectrum*, while published the year that Huber graduated from Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg) College, contains information from his junior year.

14. *Ibid*, 20.

15. *Ibid*, 19.

16. *1893 Spectrum*, 64. This edition of *The Spectrum*, while published the year after Huber graduated from Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg) College, contains information from his senior year.

After a brief period away, Huber, like his father before him, returned to his alma mater to continue his professional career as an educator. When Huber was hired to serve as Principal of the preparatory department in 1896, he was also appointed to the faculty of Pennsylvania College, enjoying many of the privileges that came with that appointment, even though he would be working exclusively at the preparatory department. Huber describes the opportunity to join, as a newly appointed faculty member, in to an “exceedingly interesting and informing” conversation with some seasoned members of the Pennsylvania College faculty at Buehler’s Drug Store.¹⁷ According to Huber, faculty gathered at the drug store in town because this was the place where they collected their mail, in the days before mail delivery.¹⁸ It is not difficult to imagine a young Huber (he was around 25 at his appointment) as a newly appointed faculty member relishing the chance to join in a conversation with some of the wisest men in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, at the time. This process of new faculty joining into a conversation with seasoned faculty, as Huber describes, did not last forever, and what Huber describes as “The Forum” ended when it was announced that the citizens of Gettysburg would have their mail delivered every day, without having to wait at Buehler’s for it to arrive.¹⁹

At the time of Huber’s hiring as Principal in 1896, the preparatory department of Pennsylvania College, housed in Stevens Hall, was designed to provide a secondary education to students planning on entering college, with a special emphasis on preparing students to graduate directly to become full students at the main college itself.²⁰ Indeed, Huber himself often played a major role in ensuring that certain students were admitted to the college directly from the

17. Hefelbower, *The History of Gettysburg College*, 440.

18. *Ibid*, 440.

19. *Ibid*, 441.

20. Glatfelter, *A Statutory Influence*, 273.

academy,²¹ a process that is not too different from influential high school principals and guidance counselors “pulling strings” for certain students to get into college. By 1911, high school enrollment nationwide, and specifically at the preparatory department, had grown significantly, prompting the trustees to agree to building a better building to replace Stevens Hall. Around this time, the college began referring to the preparatory department as the Gettysburg Academy, a name that it held until it was eliminated in 1935.²² By the time that the preparatory department moved into its new home in what is now known as Huber Hall in 1916, Huber had served as principal of the academy for twenty years and by 1921 was known as Headmaster, not even halfway into his time at the college.²³

During his tenure, Huber was known by students and faculty members to be a strict disciplinarian, attempting to keep all of the young students under his command under his order. Huber’s order included a highly regimented schedule for the young men who entered the academy, beginning with a wake-up call at 6:45 am, and ending with “study and quiet for the night”²⁴ at 8:00pm. Saturdays consisted of room inspections and the possibility of “an occasional musical or social function,” with Sunday mornings consisting of an early morning Bible class conducted by Huber himself.²⁵ When women were admitted to the college in 1935 in larger numbers for the first time and Huber was serving as the newly appointed Director of the Women’s Davison upon the closure of the Academy, Huber attempted to put the same

21. Glatfelter, 534.

22. Glatfelter, 532.

23. 1921 *OSAGA*, 17. The *OSAGA* (Old Spirit of Gettysburg Academy) was the yearbook of the Gettysburg Academy.

24. Gettysburg Academy, “Announcement of Courses for 1916-1917,” 8. Accessed in the Papers of Charles H. Huber, Box MS-005, in the Gettysburg College Archives at Musselman Library.

25. *Ibid.*

restrictions on them that he put onto his students at the academy.²⁶ Many students also viewed Huber as a strict, austere man who “ran a tight ship,” at the Academy itself. In the words of one former Gettysburg College student from the 1930s, students who liked Huber would refer to him as “Uncle Charlie,” while students who disliked him would refer to him as “Aunt Charlie.”²⁷ Huber’s personal and business correspondence also indicates that he was actively involved in a number of activities in and around Gettysburg. Just as he used his considerable influence to ensure that special students received admission to the college, so he used his influence to help others gain employment. In one case, he wrote several times to the President of Hood College in Maryland regarding a particularly motivated Canadian woman proficient in physical education to be considered for a possible job vacancy should one occur.²⁸ From the general running of the Academy, including the operation of the physical building, curriculum, and other activities, Huber also fielded correspondence regarding some rather trivial matters. The Reverend Henry Anstadt of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chambersburg wrote to Huber in the fall of 1929 requesting a hearing with a man who “was at one time a Roman Catholic,” who had been selling fruit to the academy until Huber insisted that it purchase only from local vendors.²⁹ For the Headmaster, no matter was too trivial if it involved the functioning of the academy.

A postcard from 1924 lists some of the qualities advertised by the Academy when attracting potential students to enroll, calling it “a well equipped, home-like school,” with “hot

26. Harold Dunkelberger, interview by the author, Gettysburg, PA, February 16, 2010. Dunkelberger was Professor of Religion at Gettysburg College from 1950 to 1983 and was a neighbor of Huber’s for several years in Gettysburg, PA.

27. Mildred “Dimi” Johnson, interview with the author, Gettysburg, PA, February 22, 2010. Mrs. Johnson is a 1933 graduate of Gettysburg College, and, at age 98, is the oldest living alumnus of the college. Originally from York, PA, she worked in the college’s development office and then served as Administrative Assistant to the President of Gettysburg College in the 1950s.

28. Charles H. Huber to Dr. Joseph H. Apple, November 26, 1928. Accessed in the Papers of Charles H. Huber, Box MS-005 in the Gettysburg College Archives.

29. Rev. Henry Anstadt to Charles H. Huber, September 24, 1929. Accessed in the Papers of Charles H. Huber, Box MS-005, in the Gettysburg College Archives.

and cold shower baths” and with “Christian Character and teaching emphasized.”³⁰ The academic program was rigorous, designed to provide students a solid foundation for attending college after the completion of their studies. Higher-level classes included Greek, French, and Latin, which Huber himself would teach in addition to his responsibilities as Headmaster.³¹ Life at the academy was not centered solely around “Christian character and teaching.” A number of clubs and organizations were operated within the confines of the Academy, separate from the larger Pennsylvania College. These included “three literary societies, a Y.M.C.A., a ministerial association, a glee club, dances, an academy Senate, and a yearbook,” in addition to a number of sports programs.³²

Despite the influence of Headmaster Huber, on April 4, 1935, the Board of Trustees of Gettysburg College voted close the Gettysburg Academy, ending almost a century of preparing young students for admission to college. While the Academy would be closed, the Trustees did not forget about Huber, and “elected him Director of the Women’s Campus of Gettysburg College. . . Dr. Huber shall, by this election to the Directorship, enjoy the rank of a full professor of the faculty of Gettysburg College.”³³ For the remaining six years of his tenure at Gettysburg, Huber would take on the role of guiding the young women who were now being admitted to the college in greater numbers than ever before. While women had been admitted to the college for many years, the 1935-1936 academic year would begin the college’s effort more actively recruit to young women. Many trustees did not want women to be admitted to what was, in their minds, a men’s college, but the financial situation of the college (and the country as a whole) prevailed,

30. Gettysburg Academy to Sterling Valentine, April 16, 1925. Accessed from the vertical file on the “Gettysburg Academy,” in the Gettysburg College Archives.

31. Moyer, 79-80.

32. Glatfelter, 534.

33. Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Gettysburg College, April 4, 1935, 328.

and the trustees decided that admitting women could bring in some additional revenue.³⁴ That year, Charles Huber would once again be one of the subjects of the Board of Trustees, this time at the May 31, 1941 board meeting. On that day, the trustees elevated Huber to Professor Emeritus effective at the close of the academic year, authorized the President of the College to “pay a public tribute to Dr. Huber at our Alumni Collation,” and “that Old Main be designated as Huber Hall,” forever linking Huber to the building and the academy where he had spent almost fifty years of his lifetime.³⁵ Viewed from today’s society, where there are very few individuals who hold the same position for their entire professional career, Huber’s 48 year tenure at Gettysburg College is even more impressive, a fact that Huber himself was very proud of. In a 1934 letter to another long-time educator, Huber describes himself as “among that very exclusive class in the social order who can hold one job for forty years or more.”³⁶

While the story of Charles Huber and of the Gettysburg Academy may be unknown to the current and recent residents of Huber Hall, few who know that story could deny Huber’s half century of dedication to Gettysburg College and to the Gettysburg Academy. From his first day at the Academy as a sixteen year old boy to his ascension to Professor Emeritus status in 1941, Charles Huber was consistently an active figure in many of the college’s major and minor decisions, ranging from the acceptance of orange and blue as the school colors to the full admission of women to the college. Though he no longer oversees the guidance and education of the residents of Huber Hall, his austere portrait in the center of the common room serves as a reminder that Huber Hall continues to be *his* building.

34. Mildred Johnson, author interview.

35. Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Gettysburg College, May 31, 1941, 14.

36. Charles H. Huber to Dr. Charles B. Fager, Jr., January 16, 1934. Accessed in the Papers of Charles H. Huber, Box MS-005, in the Gettysburg College Archives.

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I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.