

LAPHAM INSTITUTE

BY GLADYS BRAYTON

Overlooking the village of North Scituate stands a landmark which has been variously known to the generations spanning the last one hundred and twenty years as Smithfield Seminary, Lapham Institute, Moswansicut Hotel, Pentecostal Institute and finally the Watchman Industrial School and Camps.

In 1837 the Rhode Island Association of Freewill Baptists felt the need of a place where both sexes could receive a general education without being drawn away from the denomination's teachings. They raised the sum of \$30,000 for the purpose, selling stock in the venture at \$50 a share.

They purchased a site at a little place called Smithville, part of North Scituate, and here they erected an imposing building in Southern Colonial style. It was composed of three main units, a central administration building with two dormitory wings at the North and South ends, connected to the main building by two blocks of recitation and school rooms.

Grounds and building took the \$30,000 which they had raised, so running expenses had to be met by the tuition and board of the pupils.

In the fall of 1839 the school was opened with the Rev Hosea Quimby, A. M. as the first Principal, assisted by one male and one female teacher. Mr. Quimby had been chosen not only for his excellent qualifications as a teacher and his skill in management of the young but, with those running expenses still to be met, for his executive ability as well.

Young people of moral character who could read intelligently were to be accepted and carried forward in their studies sufficiently to enter college, teach school or enter any business for which Literature and Science could fit them, we learn from their catalog. Tuition was to be from \$4 to \$7 a quarter for instruction in common and higher English and ancient and modern language, with an extra charge for the ornamental branches, music and drawing.

Rooms were provided for the "ladies in the north dormitory and for the "gentlemen" in the south dormitory. Meals were furnished at two tables at a cost of \$1.12 1-2 or \$1.50 per week. To further reduce this modest fee \$1.12 1-2 a week could be saved at either table if the student took care of his own room.

This would not have entailed too much labor for the rooms were "simply furnished" with a wooden bedstead and chair. If students wished carpets they had to be brought from home and would have been a comforting bit of luxury to step out on in the cold of a winter morning, for the rooms were unheated at first.

The whole expense of the course varied from \$20 to \$27 a quarter. The school was advertised as being easily accessible from any part of the country, for stages ran by three or four times a day from Providence and the fare was but \$.41. The school seems to have been well patronized, as pupils entered from all the New England states except Vermont.

In 1841 there were one hundred and fifty boarders. The scholastic standing of the school was admittedly high, but the same could not be said of the financial standing. The revenue was not enough to swing the financial burden of the project.

In 1850 the Freewill Baptist Association finally sold the property to Mr. Quimby and he ran it for four years more, still retaining the old name of Smithville Seminary. Hard working and capable as he was he could not overcome the financial difficulties which arose.

In other respects the school was a great success and graduated such men as William and Amasa Sprague. The former was to become Rhode Island's Governor in later years and Amasa was to take his place in the financial and sport world as head of the far flung Sprague interests and builder of the famous Narragansett Trotting Park in Cranston.

The school held an annual examination and exhibition at the end of the summer term in late July or August. It was a festive time at the Seminary and lasted for three days. The Board of Examiners took two days for the gruelling examination and then all celebrated the third day with a grand exhibition of the year's work.

The hall was decorated with numerous specimens of richly framed pencillings, crayon drawings and paintings executed by the pupils. Much time had been spent on the poems, orations, original compositions and dialogues presented in a long program which lasted some five hours. These offerings were interspersed with selections by the Brass Band of Providence. An examiner's report states that "the crowded audience was amused, impressed and gratified" by it all.

THE MEMORY IS GONE BUT THE GLORY LIVES ON

There were one hundred and fourteen male and sixty-nine female students in 1853. They came from such far away places as Nova Scotia, New Orleans, Louisiana and New York City, as well as the New England States. Mr. Quimby's object in teaching, which he said was to make pupils think for themselves and understand clearly and thoroughly what they went over, seems to have been widely appreciated.

In 1854 Mr. Quimby's health having failed he leased the school for three years to Mr. S. P. Coburn, A. M., an alumnus of Dartmouth College, who became the Principal and general manager. The same English, Classical and Ornamental education was offered. "Special pains", said the catalog, "will be taken with those who design to teach, with lectures and a thorough training in Reading and Elocution, Analysis and the best mode of discipline and imparting instruction."

It may be significant that a State Normal School had been established by an act of the Legislature at the May session of that year which was opened in rooms adjoining the Second Universalist Church on Broad Street Providence. The Seminary may have anticipated competition.

Valuable apparatus was available for illustration of natural sciences and quite an extensive Cabinet containing specimens of Mineralogy, Geology, Conchology, etc. had been accumulated. Stoves had been added to the dormitory rooms at some time during Mr. Quimby's management, which had raised tuition costs to \$33 a quarter. Day scholars, studying in the Hall, were charged \$6.

There were extras if one had the inclination or the price, such as Latin and Greek or pencil drawing for \$1.50, modern languages for \$2, crayon drawing \$3, painting in water colors at \$4 and in oil paints at \$6. Instruction in piano was \$10 with a charge of \$2 for use of piano or melodeon two hours per day if taking lessons and \$3 if not taking lessons. Vocal music cost \$1 and harmony \$5.

Visitors were welcome and were asked to call at the center building where they would be accommodated with a parlor in which to visit with their friends but were asked to avoid visiting on the Sabbath.

Messrs. Colegrove and Coburn purchased the property of Mr. Quimby in 1857 and for a time were joint proprietors and instructors. Subsequently Mr. Coburn disposed of his share to Mr. Colegrove who continued the school it is said "with varying degrees of efficiency, encouragement and success", until the summer of 1859 when the Warwick Institution for Savings which had held a mortgage on the property for several years, took possession of it.

It is said that the original share holders never realized a

cent on their investment, but the public at large and the community had surely benefited.

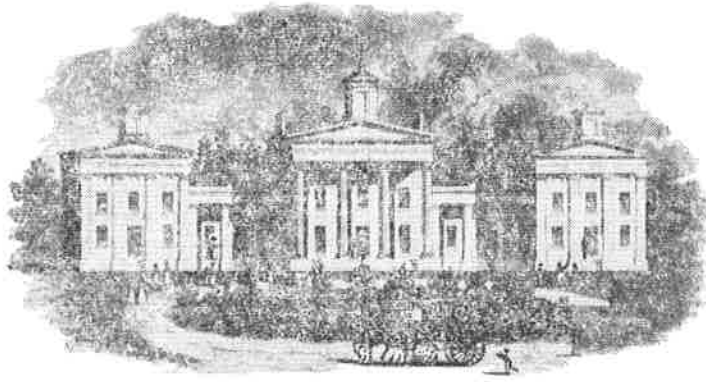
The school remained closed until 1863 when the Honorable Benedict Lapham of Warwick, a former pupil at the Seminary, and former Representative from Scituate, bought the property and gave it back to the R. I. Association of Freewill Baptists as a gift. The school was renamed the Lapham Institute out of gratitude for Mr. Lapham's generosity.

Other gifts were solicited and the money used for repairs and improvements. Charles H. Franklin was the next largest contributor with a gift of \$1000 and the hall in the main part of the building was named Franklin Hall for him. William D. Brayton of Warwick started a library fund with the gift of \$250 for the purchase of standard works for the library, which had been neither large nor select, and also gave another \$250 toward the general fund. Others contributed both money in varying sums and books.

The Cabinet needed to be enlarged and friends were solicited in all parts of the country for geological and mineralogical specimens. Soldier friends in the Southern States were asked to make collections of fossil shells. "Who", it was asked, "will begin the collection for the illustration of Natural History and Comparative Anatomy? Will not some friend or friends furnish a skeleton and a manikin?" Later catalogs showed no friend had seen fit to come forward and grant this particular request.

The property was added to, repaired, painted and papered and the kitchen fitted in modern style, which meant provided with hot and cold water. A cistern holding one hundred seventy-five to two hundred hogshead of water made the laundry department more efficient and assured better fire protection. Friends were generous and success was confidently expected.

Continued Next Issue



LAPHAM INSTITUTE, NORTH SCITUATE, R. I.

LAPHAM INSTITUTE

BY GLADYS BRAYTON

THE MEMORY IS GONE
BUT THE GLORY
LIVES ON

Benedict Lapham was made President of the Board of Directors and Rev. B. F. Hayes was elected the new Principal.

Board went up a little to \$2 a week and room rent was from \$2 to \$4 per term. The rooms were now furnished with table, stove, bed and chairs. Tuition varied from \$4 to \$6.50 a term according to the studies pursued.

Two societies were organized to encourage creative literary work, the Philologist Society for the gentlemen and the Pierian Society for the ladies. In addition there was the Institute Temperance Society and Phillip's Missionary Society, open to both sexes. These must have been a pleasant co-ed diversion, for regulations of the school stated that neither ladies nor gentlemen will be allowed to visit, walk, ride or otherwise associate with the opposite sex, except as they may be specially permitted to do so by the Principal.

Students were required to be present at religious services daily at the Chapel, to "observe the Sabbath with quietude" and to attend two regular services on that day at one of the churches of their parents' choice in the nearby village.

In 1868 the Institute planned a three day reunion in July to celebrate five prosperous and successful years.

The catalog of 1871 carries a new picture of the Institute. There is a natural setting of trees in the background augmented by appropriate plantings in front of the building. A two rail fence separates this from a circular driveway which encloses an area before the main doorway, landscaped with evergreens. A picket fence runs the full length of the long driveway which leads to the main highway. On the left the ladies are most decorously engaged in croquet, wearing long pannered skirts, while the men are similarly engaged on their court at the right. Not a head in the picture is bared to the rays of the sun. Hats preserve the dignity of every lady and gentlemen while in the public eye, even during their hour of sport.

It is a busy day at the Institute in the picture, for on the driveway and steps are the many friends and relatives of the students arrivin gand departing in horse drawn vehicles. One is a handsome broughman drawn by a pair of horses, the driver stiff and straight on his high box seat. All the female visitors look most genteel and are protecting their complexions by carrying parasols, while the men sport the fashionable walking stick of the times. All in all it is a picture of elegance, culture and refinement, a fitting introduction to the written material on this worthy and flourishing institution of learning which follows in the pages of this catalog printed by A. Crawford Green, State Printer, at Railroad Hall, Providence.

Hon. Benedict Lapham is still President of the Board of Trustees but Prof. George H. Ricker, the widely known Classical scholar, is the Principal. He had succeeded Prof. Thomas L. Angell in 1867 who had previously succeeded the Rev. B. F. Hayes in 1865. Both had gone to Bates College when they left the Institute.

Prof. Ricker remained with the school as its Principal seven years and then in 1874 went to Hillsdale College, Michigan, where he accepted the chair of Latin and Greek.

Mr. A. G. Moulton was selected his successor but died at the close of his first year and Mr. W. S. Stockbridge succeeded him in the autumn of 1875. Fifteen hundred students had been instructed here in its thirty-seventh year of existence and thirty-fourth year year of active life.

In post war days it had the reputation of being the most distinguished of the old country academies in the state and counted many men of outstanding ability among its graduates. But financial troubles again raised an ugly problem. It is said the re-establishment of the Normal School in Providence (it had been moved from Providence to Warren, died out and been re-established in Providence) dealt the Institute a heavy blow. By 1876 it was being supported by the munificence of William Winsor of Greenville, who, we are told, "stood instead of endowment".

The property was finally taken over by the bank which held the mortgage. Various schemes were suggested for its use. Its size and site commended it for use as a hotel but Mr. Winsor was loathe to give up the idea of its use for academic purposes. It was later

leased for several years to Mr. Henry S. Turner and catered to the public as Moswansicut Hotel and is mentioned in Marianna Tallman's book called Pleasant Places in Rhode Island.

Abandoned again, it awaited a new fate. In 1901 the Providence Overseer of the Poor, the Probation and Truant Officers, the Agent of State Charities and Correction and the Agent for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children proposed making it a juvenile school for boys. Instead the property was taken over by the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene of America in 1902 as a permanent home for the Pentecostal Collegiate Institute which had organized at Saratoga Springs, N. Y. on September 25, 1900 with an enrollment of fifty-one students and increased to seventy-eight the following year. Its purpose was to educate young men and women mentally and spiritually that they might intelligently spread scriptural holiness as Christian workers and musicians. In its new home and under a new plan it became practically interdenominational.

In 1906 Rev. Ernest E. Angell, a graduate of Wesleyan Theological College, became its Principal. He saw the need of providing worthy students, who could not afford an education, with means to procure the necessary money. In 1908 he bought a bundle of broom straw and did a little experimenting in the manufacture of a broom. He transformed a small hen coop into a bleach house for bleaching the straw with sulfur fumes. It proved to be too full of cracks. Undaunted he requisitioned an old pulpit, used by one of his predecessors, for the purpose. It worked much better and in time he turned out a very acceptable broom. It was retained by the school as a treasured memento.

Finding his experiment feasible in 1911 an old barn on the premises was transformed into a broom factory. All work was put on a practical basis where it competed with skilled labor in the open market. Students were paid wages in coin and the products were sold as they would be in any independent business enterprise. Five hours were allotted to the students for their books, five for play and five for work.

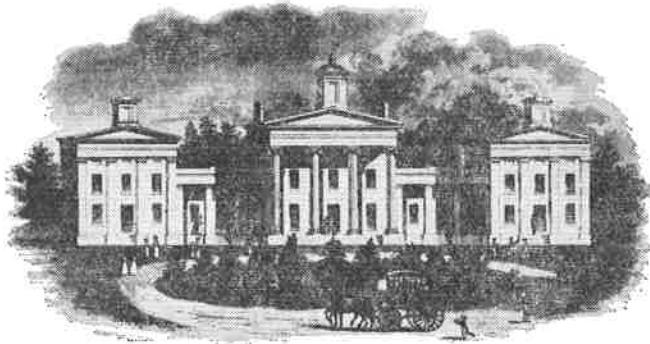
Straw was purchased from the West by the car load and was sorted in the basement of the barn by the girl students. It was then tied in bundles to be bleached and dyed. Young men received it in the winding room where they bound it to the handles as they were whirled in the machines. This left the broom cylindrical in form with jagged ends. The next step was to pass it through a great sewing machine which pressed the straw into shape and bound it. It was then ready for the finishing department in the hay loft where it was trimmed, labelled

and sorted for market. All kinds of brooms were made from rough stable brooms to fine clothes whisk brooms.

Students worked by the piece and averaged \$.15 an hour. It was arranged so that students could spend as much or as little time as they wished earning money, taking five years for the ordinary four year course if their finances demanded it. Work in the shops was continuous from seven in the morning until six at night, the students working in either one of two shifts. They made about thirty dozen brooms a day during the school year and raised it to fifty dozen a day during the summer if they wished to stay on to earn extra money and most of them did so. There were ninety-four students at this time. More than 25% were working their entire way through school and 50% were partly paying their way. The broom shop was augmented by a mop factory, sewing department and printing plant as time went on and their scheme of self help worked out well.

They made much of music at the school. Miss Janet Shepard was the instructor. They held their graduations at the Free Baptist Church and enjoyed a Lantern Festival each year in the pine grove on their own grounds co-sponsored by one of the local churches. This Festival is remembered as one of the gala occasions of the village.

In December 1920 it was announced through the press that the property owned by the Eastern Nazarene College and occupied until recently by the Pentecostal Institute, which had been moved to Wollaston, Massachusetts, was to be sold to the Watchman Industrial Society through Rev. William S. Holland, head of the Society.



A. Crawford Green, Providence, R.I.

August 5, 1869
I hereby certify that *Samuel Mathison* is the owner of one share
of FIFTY DOLLARS in the *Smithville Seminary, Smithville, R.I.*
feable at the Seminary by himself or a legally appointed Agent.
John H. Anthony Secy } *Martin Cheney* Pres:

OUR NEXT MEETING

Tuesday Evening, August 25, 1959, 8 P. M., Greene Camp Meeting Tabernacle. Take Plainfield Pike, Route 14 to Fairbanks Corners (just west of Rice City), then Route 117 to the three corners at Greene and straight ahead thru the village to the Camp Ground. From Pawtuxet Valley take Route 117 west to Greene. Tables will be available for picnic suppers.

Speaker JOHN W. PLACE Subject DISASTERS AT GREENE

Group singing of Camp Meeting Songs.

Social Hour with refreshments. — The public is cordially invited. Plan to be with us, rain or shine, for an enjoyable evening.

John W. Place, Corr. Secy., 301 Union Trust Bldg., Providence 3, R. I.

JULY MEETING

The 14th Annual Meeting was held on July 28th 1959 in the Clayville Community Church on Plainfield Pike, Foster, at 8 P. M.

President Sayles Gorham presided. Rev. Dudley Tyng gave the invocation. Secretary's report of the June meeting was approved as read. The Treasurer reported \$452.08 in the general fund and \$3616.02 in the building fund.

The Annual report of the Membership Secretary showed 644 members. Lost by death during the year 15 members; a moment of silent prayer was observed in their memory.

Count by towns showed 160 persons present. Warming Pan collection was \$52.30

Mathias Harpin spoke on behalf of the Valley Art Association which wishes to hold exhibits and meetings at Paine House. According to our by-laws such a request must be decided by the Board of Directors. Mrs. Louise Roberts president of the association was introduced.

The report of the Nominating Committee was read by Mrs. Newell C. Shippee, Chairman. Members were Mr. Lawrence E. Wagner and Mr. William B. Spencer. Mr. Turner moved that the secretary cast one ballot for the slate as read; seconded by Rev. Tyng and passed by voice vote.

Mr. Gorham introduced Mr. Frank G. Briggs president elect and turned the symbol of that office, our gavel made from part of a timber of the General Nathanael Greene Homestead, over to him. Mr. Briggs accepted, saying it was a privilege and honor to head our organization. He asked Mr. Gorham to preside for the rest of the meeting.

We were entertained by John Higgins who played two cornet solos and Miss Barbara Loven, accompanied by Mrs. George Hopkins, who sang "Who Cares For Me" and "I Believe".

Our speakers were: Miss Vivian D. Mathewson, Secretary of the Mathewson Family Congress, and her brother Clayton Mathewson of Boston, Mass. and Fay Mathewson of Plainfield, N. J. "Memories and Hearsays About Clayville Village" was their subject.

Mr. Gorham said he had enjoyed his term as president, and paid tribute to the officers and members who had helped him, especially Mr. John W. Place for his hard work in arranging the programs for our meetings.

Refreshments were served by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Rathbun and Mrs. Louis Harris.

Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society

Officers Elected at Annual Meeting July 28, 1959

- President Mr. Frank G. Briggs
Vice President Mr. Maxwell Mays
Vice President Mr. John E. Wiggins
Recording Secretary Mrs. William L. Mullins
Corresponding Secretary Mr. John W. Place
Membership Secretary Mrs. Newell C. Shippee
Treasurer Mrs. Everett E. Hudson
Curator Mrs. Luther W. Patterson
Historian Mr. Stanley S. Gairloch

THE HINTERLANDER Bulletin of the Western R. I. Civic Historical Society Paine House, Coventry, R. I.

SECOND CLASS MAIL PRIVILEGES AUTHORIZED AT COVENTRY, RHODE ISLAND

PUBLISHED MONTHLY EXCEPT DEC., JAN. AND FEB.

R. I. Historical Society 52 Power St. Providence 6, R. I.

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

LAPHAM INSTITUTE

BY GLADYS W. BRAYTON

CONCLUSION

Dr. Holland's father was a slave in Virginia. Dr. Holland just escaped the same fate by two years. He was born in 1867 just after the war. He received his education in the South and graduated from the Richmond Theological Seminary in 1897. He came to Providence in 1908, called by the Ebenezer Baptist Church, after having served in two churches in Virginia.

He started The Watchman Industrial School at 140 Coddling Street, naming it for one of his favorite texts found in Isaiah 21, verses 11 and 12. "Watchman, what of the night? and the watchman said, The morning cometh." It became a community center and a child health and baby clinic.

In 1923 The Watchman Industrial School moved to its head quarters in North Scituate. Inspired by Booker T. Washington it was Dr. Holland's idea to train Negro youth along industrial lines as they acquired scholastic training, as he had seen it done at Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes in the South.

In 1924 the school had its first fire which took the three story southern dormitory wing.

In 1926 fire again swept the building, taking the north dormitory wing and badly damaging the main building. As only \$5000 insurance was carried on the school the loss was tremendous. Dr. Holland made no charges but the fires were believed by him to be incendiary. There was no money to restore these dormitories and quarters had to be fixed up as best they could for the children. Marsden J. Perry alleviated the situation in some degree with a gift of money to help in the restoration of the main building.

In 1929 the depression hit the school and many pupils were unable to pay the modest fee of \$5 charged for board, tuition and lodging. But Dr. Holland, with a few contributions of money, carried on somehow. He was a determined and dedicated man who found a way or made one to overcome all obstacles.

Again in 1934 a two story wooden building on the premises mysteriously burned. One of the oldest buildings in the town it had been remodeled by the boys as a dormitory.

In 1948 at an anniversary meeting of The Watchman Industrial School, comprised at that time of the Community Center and Day Nursery at Coddling Street, Providence and the Summer Camp at North Scituate, Rev. William J. Robbins, Ph.D., Chaplain of Brown University, observed that a milestone marks not only how far you have come but how far you have to go. Rev. Holland's dream of 1908 had come a long way and survived many vicissitudes. Time shows that Dr. Holland himself had ten more years of sacrificing service to give to his project. On December 23, 1958 he died at the school where he had lived and worked for thirty-eight years. Without his leadership and on the shoestring of contributions which it receives can this man's ambitious plan survive or will the old Smithville Seminary enter yet another phase of its long useful life?

Gladys W. Brayton

I should like to thank Mr. Walter R. Turner, Mr. Charles A. Steere, Mrs. Henry W. Rice and Mr. Robert W. Sillen of Andover Newton Theological Library for material they so generously loaned toward the compilation of this article.

THE HINTERLANDER

MR. MATHIAS P. HARPIN, EDITOR, RIDGE HILL FARM, HOPE, R. I.
MRS. DONALD C. CLARK, ASSOCIATE EDITOR, COVENTRY CENTER, R. I.