

## Earlham

By Chalmers Hadley, '96

Editor's Note: On May 10, 1943, Chalmers Hadley, Librarian of the Cincinnati Public Library, read before the Literary Club of that city a paper entitled "Earlham" which afterwards came into the possession of the College. Since the paper is doubtless of even greater interest to Earlhamites than to its first appreciative audience, and since it treats the second generation of Earlhamites, whereas similar published material heretofore has treated of the first generation, the Editor has secured Mr. Hadley's permission to use it in the alumni publication. Only a beginning can be made this issue, but the balance will appear later.

Two recent papers, Murray Seasongood's "Edgeborough" and Louis More's recollections of his educational life, suggest a series of "Club Papers" on the schooling and colleges represented in our membership. In spite of resemblances there would doubtless be as many unique characteristics as if each member wrote his own autobiography.

There was nothing remarkable about my own school, particularly as to externals, but there must have been something unusual in its effect on me for after four decades I still occasionally dream of it, which psychologists insist represents an impress on one's subconscious self. Perhaps this should not be surprising, for the college prospectus announced that it aimed to influence the students' lives as well as their heads.

I do not remember any discussion of college plans in my hearing at home, nor was I consulted as to my wishes in the matter. Doubtless this would have been unnecessary since it was a foregone conclusion in my mind as well as with my parents as to where I would go. One of my earliest recollections of my father was riding with him when he designated a passing train as the one I would take for college.

It was not a distinguished nor fashionable institution—quite the contrary. Its faculty was small but excellent in character and scholarship, and the college was under the supervision of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, in which I had a birthright membership. Its particular claim on me came from that fact and because my father and several of his family had been students there.

The great English Quaker banking family, the Gurneys, had been interested and generous when the college was founded and it was named Earlham after their country home near Norwich, England, so beautifully written about by Percy Lubbock, the English essayist, in his book entitled "Earlham." In my father's day the college still showed English influences. Cricket was popular but through lack of competing teams tennis and baseball superseded it. The men's

dormitory had been conducted on the English system, but its only survival in my time was the proctor or governor, as we called the dormitory head who enforced its rules.

I had pored over the college catalog until much of it had been memorized. The college property consisted of about 130 acres adjacent to open country, and besides the campus proper with its buildings and sport fields there were woods, a farm and herd of cattle and vegetable gardens which supplied the college tables, so the prospectus stated. I was a little concerned over this last statement and recalled my father's remarks on the unadorned plainness and monotony of food in his day.

In regard to the curriculum, he had gone in for Greek and Latin, which I eschewed together with all mathematics as well, except freshman trigonometry which was required. Concluding I would undoubtedly flunk in this subject anyway, I decided to save money by not buying a trigonometry textbook. Strange to say I got through after rigorous "boning"—an exhausting and not to be recommended practice.

My father was a deeply affectionate but also a highly reserved man, and his Quaker training was against any emotional display, as was seen when he escorted me to the train when I left for Earlham. Perhaps the remembrance of his own college days together with our parting affected him so he avoided addressing me with the more intimate "you" or "thee." Instead, he remarked to me in the impersonal third person, "If he gets out of money or needs anything, he will have to let me know."

At the end of my short journey my luggage was left for the college van and I walked the two miles to Earlham to spy out the country. Main Street descended west to the river, spanned by a covered wooden bridge with walks for pedestrians protected by barriers from heavy traffic. Rising to a hill beyond, the road passed a toll gate with its bar to be raised and lowered, and a drinking trough for horses—half of a hollow log—filled with running spring water. Beyond lay scattered houses and then, the Earlham campus.

The college buildings were quite a distance back from the highway and were approached by a drive flanked by two broad walks. The west one was for the young women students and the east walk for the men. Here they strolled after breakfast, each on their own walk, the young



men to kick the iron post at the entrance. Fancy such isolated strollers today!

On arriving at the college I was directed to its office, which was distinguished by two interesting antiques. One was the great wall-sweep clock which ticked slowly and solemnly as I sat in some apprehension of what was before me. The clock hands and hourly designations were ornamental and a round, rosy, astronomical sun's face beamed genially on me. On one wall hung Marcus Mote's painting of an early Yearly Meeting gathering of Quakers who were arriving on horseback, in spider-like chaises and in wagons, and who were visiting socially in the open. It was a fine example of an American primitive painting and it deserves to be better known to artists and devotees of Americana.\*

Choicer front and lower rooms were claimed by the upperclassmen and mine proved to be quite a small one on the third floor. It was bare as a cell with a bed, table, two chairs and a clothes closet. Rugs, cushions, curtains, towels and napkins were to be furnished by the students themselves.

My roommate soon appeared and under his cordiality I failed to detect his disappointment, learned of later, since he and a friend had planned to room together. On our first Sunday he proposed the inspection of the nearby town's few sights, but through ignorance of necessary precautions for an absence we failed to lock our door. On our return we were surprised to see several students examining the trees outside our windows while a group of young women at a distance were eyeing our long underwear and other articles of intimate wearing apparel which flapped immodestly in the breeze and which we had great difficulty in recovering.

Coeducation was consistent with the Quaker belief in the equality of sexes, reinforced at Earlham by the feeling that educating young men and women together would be salutary for both. Their relations in classrooms and elsewhere were formal and strictly regulated. There was no calling the young women by first names and the current habit of referring to them as "gals" would have scandalized both sexes in the 'nineties.

Earlham has never been able to handle over 500 students and this number was never attained in the lean financial years of my student days.

There was a common dining hall for the men and women and considerable excitement shortly appeared with the assignment of a "gegenüber," as one's opposite at the dining table was called. New assignments came at the beginning of each

of the three college terms and it was really an important event. The arrangement discouraged cliques and made for a wider acquaintance.

At the head of each table sat a bachelor professor or a man senior of standing who carved the joints of meat. At the table's other end sat a woman instructor or officer who presided over the tea and coffee. Toward the center were placed the younger classmen who managed the pitchers of milk which seemed unlimited in quantity, the butter and the college-baked bread. Waitresses scurried about trying to meet pressing demands. The dining hall always smelled of roast beef and scrubbed oak board floor.

Most of the students were from Quaker families hailing from Massachusetts to California with a few Canadians, Japanese, and American Indians, the last named representing the traditional friendliness between them and the Quakers from William Penn's day to the present.

One Indian maiden, Zitkala-Sa or "Red Bird," once sat near me. She was a Sioux, slender as Minnehaha, and she was a talented musician. Her relations with other students were pleasant but somewhat distant. She walked alone about the campus intent on avoiding the fluffy dandelion heads which she did not wish to injure. We heard she could not study in her room on spring and autumn nights since she sat in darkness to protect the moths, which fluttered through the open windows, from burning their wings in the lighted gas jet.

To the chagrin of the men students, she carried off the college oratorical honors and then covered herself with glory at the state oratorical meeting with her impassioned plea for a just treatment of her people. For her graduation thesis she collected legends of her own tribe, translated them into Latin to meet college requirements and then re-wrote them in English for children, and their publication remains today a standard juvenile book. She married an Indian Harvard graduate and died recently, after spending her life in Washington protecting and advancing Indian welfare legislation.

The dining hall was under the supervision of the college superintendent and his wife, the latter whose given name was Charity serving as matron. They sat at opposite ends of the long center dining table. At the close of breakfast in the midst of general conversation and merriment Superintendent John would suddenly bang his table bell for silence. It usually required great control to prevent an explosion of mirth as all the safety valves were suddenly closed.

(Continued on page 20)

\*This picture now hangs in the Registrar's Office.