

THE YELLOW WASP

Lima Historical Society

September 2020

Lima's Historic Treasure: The Campus on the Hill

Walk up either College or Genesee Street and find yourself facing the campus of Lima's most significant architectural treasure—the historic campus of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary and Genesee College, and today's Elim Bible Institute and College. It is

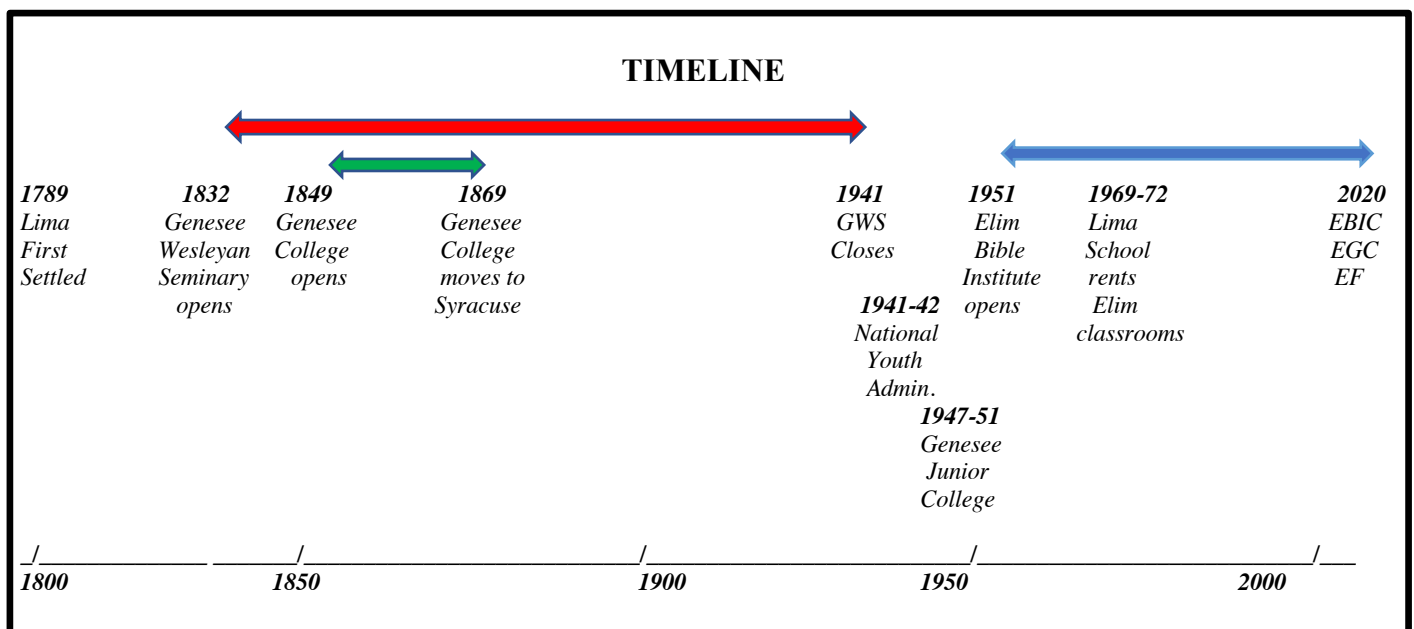


difficult to overstate the impact that educational activities on this campus have had on the character and development of Lima as a community. Nor is it possible to overestimate the potential impacts on Lima if such activities on that campus were to cease.

Genesee Wesleyan Seminary (cf. Timeline)

It was nearly 200 years ago (1829), when the town was just emerging from the roughness of pioneer life on the western frontier, that the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church posed an opportunity for Lima that would completely alter the town's future by offering it a chance to compete to become the home of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary. The people of Lima met the challenge enthusiastically, raising \$11,000 in "subscriptions" to cover future construction costs, and donating a prominent hilltop building site that included a 90-acre farm (contributed by landowner Augustus A. Bennett). That was apparently enough to carry the day because Lima was chosen from a list of prominent contending towns. In 1832, the school opened to 239 young men and 11 young women—making it one of the first co-educational institutions of higher education in the country.

The seminary drew students from across the state and well beyond, but it also provided the children of Lima residents an opportunity for an exceptional classical education at a time when Lima still had no public high school. While technically a "high school," GWS offered an educational curriculum that would be barely recognizable to today's high school students with courses in Latin and Greek, literary arts, music, engineering preparatory, and commerce. Unfortunately, the original building was destroyed by fire in 1842, just ten years after it opened, but again the community rose to the occasion providing temporary quarters for students and classes. By 1843, the building had been reconstructed, with the addition of a 4th floor, on the cut stone foundation of the original building. (see photo above; two story porches added later). The student body grew to over 600 by the 1850's, attracting a host of nationally-recognized faculty and staff to the community, as well as many new families who relocated to Lima to provide their offspring with the cultural advantages and education that were available through GWS. Construction of new, high quality houses surged in the village during the 1830s -1860s, contributing to Lima's unusual legacy of 53 homes and other (continued on p. 2)



LHS Calendar of Events

PLEASE CLIP AND SAVE

Tuesday, September 15th 7 pm

LHS Annual Meeting/Elections ZOOM MEETING for all LHS members. Invitations will be sent by email. See information on p. 3

October Date TBD

Lima Historical Society Board Meeting. ZOOM MEETING or Tennie Burton Museum, 7pm.

Tuesday, November 10th 7 pm

The Real Underground Railroad” by Tim McDonnell of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, RIT. Lima Town Hall basement 7 pm

LIMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1850 ROCHESTER ST. LIMA NY 14485 (585-624-1050)

www.limahistorical.org

The Campus on the Hill (continued)

and other structures celebrated on the National Register of Historic Places. The influx of population also spurred the growth of downtown businesses, such as grocers, drug stores, photographers, dry goods stores, etc.— making Lima a thriving 19th century commercial center, widely known throughout western NY.

Genesee College (cf. Timeline)

Chartered in 1849, Genesee College greatly expanded the educational opportunities available on the Lima campus. The architecturally imposing College Hall was completed in 1851 with plans for a matching structure on the opposite side of the campus, which never materialized. Within a decade there were over 1000 students on the shared campus; it seems likely, based on census data, that during those years many students were being housed in neighborhood homes close to the campus. During the US Civil War, College Hall became the site of student recruiting efforts for Company G of the 27th Infantry Regiment of the Union Army.



Around 1870, for a variety of reasons, the College Trustees and a majority of the College faculty opted to move to Syracuse, NY, and ultimately became the nucleus of today’s Syracuse University. The rather significant College assets, including the majestic College Hall, were transferred to Genesee Wesleyan Seminary which continued to educate students for another 70 years.

A number of buildings were added later to the campus, including a large Boys’ Dormitory which burned in 1897 (replaced by the much smaller Faling Hall), and later, Washington Hall—a dormitory and laundry, a gymnasium, and a music hall. The Seminary continued to operate well into the 20th century—but due to dropping enrollment and perhaps the demands of WWII, GWS would close its doors in 1941. Over the years, an estimated 36,000 students had received an education on the Lima campus.

National Youth Administration (NYA) (cf. Timeline)

One of the New Deal programs promoted by Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt during WWII to stem the effects of the depression and impart practical job skills to impoverished young people was the National Youth Administration. The classrooms and dormitories left vacant by GWS’ closing were chosen to house the NYA’s Lima Resident Work Center during 1941 and 1942. Lamps, radios, medical instruments, table silverware and other electrical appliances were repaired or produced by over 400 students for sale to military camps, libraries and schools. **Does anyone know of any surviving items from those Lima programs?**

Genesee Junior College (cf. Timeline)

In 1947, after five years of disuse, the buildings and grounds of the campus were rehabilitated when the Genesee Methodist Conference elected to open Genesee Junior College, offering a two-year program of post high school study with a comprehensive curriculum taught by many of the old faculty and alumni of the Seminary. Dorms were modernized, the library upgraded, and sports teams competed with neighboring colleges in a refurbished gymnasium and athletic field. A student body of 150 were given education in science, the arts, business, languages, religion and history etc.—all set within the Methodist tradition of a Christian environment for learning. The school closed its doors in 1951.

JOIN LHS ANNUAL MEETING- THROUGH ZOOM (see insert)

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 7PM Instructions to members by email

The Campus on the Hill (continued)

Elim Bible Institute and College
Elim Gospel Church
Elim Fellowship

At present the campus is home to three separate but related entities: Elim Bible Institute & College, Elim Gospel Church, and Elim Fellowship. All had their roots in the Elim Bible Training School, founded in 1924 in Endwell, NY by Ivan Q. Spencer. Almost seventy years ago, in 1951, the school purchased the entire GWS campus, including its 75 acres of land from the Genesee Methodist Conference, to accommodate its growing number of students. Its primary mission for most of the years that followed was to train pastors and missionaries through a three-year certificate program widely recognized in the evangelical community.



Through the years, the Elim campus has been significantly altered by the addition of many new buildings to the historic structures built in the 19th and early 20th centuries (total of 18 buildings today). Serving the needs of the three entities sharing the campus, they include Elim Gospel Church, the S. Joy Niswander Library (on left), the Paul E. Johannssen Hall, with its modern dining facilities, a number of student residence halls, and apartments serving faculty, staff, married students, and visiting missionaries.

Today's curriculum at EBI&C includes a range of subjects in addition to theology and biblical studies; Christian principles continue to permeate student life and education.

Tireless efforts on the part of staff and faculty led to full accreditation of the renamed Elim Bible Institute and College by the NYS Board of Regents along with the ability to offer Associates A.A.S. Degrees in Biblical and Theological Studies, thus preparing students to further their education through transfer to four-year Christian institutions. Responding to current trends, EBI&C has expanded its online course offerings, and is presently seeking accreditation to offer Bachelors B.A. Degrees in the near future.

HFL School District (cf. Timeline)

For several years following the merger of Lima and Honeoye Falls school districts in 1969, classrooms were leased from Elim for elementary students from the Lima school. Many HFL alumni will remember those days in temporary quarters.

Major References Used:

Lima Historical Society Archival Records and Photos
Mabel Jenks, 1964, The Crossroads of Western New York
National Register Nomination:: Genesee Wesleyan Seminary and Genesee College
Elim Bible Institute and College, Elim Gospel Church and Elim Fellowship websites
Wikipedia: National Youth Administration, GWS, EBI&C
Kirk Adams, Civil war: Company G, 27th regiment Union Army

A New Day for Elim and Lima

By Fred Antonelli, Ph.D.

President, *Elim Bible Institute and College.*

It is both my honor and privilege to have been elected as eighth president of Elim Bible Institute and College. My goals as the new president are three-fold. First, to build and strengthen the financial infrastructure of the college. Second, to sizably increase student enrollment and finally, to see our two 19th century buildings (Main Administration and College Hall) fully restored.

EBIC is blessed to not only share, but even extend, the Christian educational history that we share with Genesee Wesleyan Seminary and Genesee College. The campus has been used as a Seminary/Bible College since 1832 (GWS) (just 48 years after the American Revolutionary War) and a college since 1849 (Genesee College). Both resulted from the Charles G. Finney revival movement in Rochester. EBIC took occupancy of the campus in 1951. Because all three of these Christian educational institutions have made their residency in Lima, it is our hope that, as restoration efforts on the two buildings begin, the Town of Lima and Elim will come together to celebrate the rich heritage and the future of this great historical campus. Quite a heritage.

The Elim Bible Institute and College campus has recently been honored with designation by the Landmark Society of Western New York as one of its "**Five to Revive**" historic sites. We at EBIC are excited to welcome our friends and neighbors of Lima and beyond on our exciting journey in restoring two of the most significant historic buildings in the State of New York.

1850 Rochester St.
 P.O. Box 532
 Lima NY 14485



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Yellow Wasp editor: Martha Sempowski
Lima Historian: Joyce Rapp
www.limahistorical.org

**LHS MEMBERS
 PLEASE VOTE!!!**

Proposed Revisions to LHS Constitution and ByLaws
 Trustee Candidates for 2020

BALLOT ENCLOSED

**LHS ANNUAL MEETING BY ZOOM
 Tuesday, September 15, 2020 7PM**

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 7306 E Main St, Lima, NY
 (585) 624-5074

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rreakes@rochester.rr.com