

ey Micklewright, is a senior at the College). The site was a fairly abandoned grove of oak trees. It was far removed from the city proper and since up until 1887 St. Ambrose remained a day school, there were some who thought that it was much too far from the city itself. As Monsignor Griffith described the location:

“The immediate vicinity of the property finally chosen was not surrounded by bright homes and paved streets in the middle '80s. Indeed the homes were precious few and the streets were in much the same condition the Indians left them, even our eleven acres of College ground were in rather primitive condition, needing many improvements as the past 50 years of excavation here and filling-in there testify.”

When the land was finally purchased in the spring of 1885, Bishop Cosgrove paid the sum of \$6,800 to Henry G. Marquand, of New York City. The *Iowa Messenger* reported the property was originally to be sold for \$12,000, but a discount had been given because an educational institution would be built there. The *Messenger* goes on to describe the location as being “on the north side of Locust Street, extending to Pleasant, and from Ripley Street to Western Avenue. Scott and High Streets are open to this tract but, of course, will never be open through it.” Work was begun on the building almost immediately. There was hope that classes would be held there at the start of the fall term. Actually, classes were delayed until the first week of November.

Victor Huot, who had designed a number of buildings for the Catholic Church in Davenport, was selected to do the architecture for the new building that was to be known as “Ambrose Hall.” The plans for the building were published during the summer of 1885. They indicate that only about one third of the total building was to be completed that year. There were provisions for making later additions as the College grew. The original building, the central section of the completed structure, was to be four stories high, 65 feet across the front, and 75 feet in depth. The building, at a completed stage, would call for an edifice that was 209 feet by 75 feet. Even though the first section was complete enough to allow classes to begin on November 2, 1885, it was not finished until some two years later. The extra space had become urgently necessary so that St. Ambrose might provide facilities for boarding students.

There was no fund drive to construct Ambrose Hall. In fact,

information about any substantial contributions to it is almost nonexistent. There is mention of a donation of \$1,000 from a John L. Miles of Davenport and \$100 from James Slattery of New York City. The central part of Ambrose Hall is generally considered to have cost about \$15,000 and Bishop Cosgrove had to go heavily into debt in order to pay for the building expenses.

July 5, 1885, saw a great number of dignitaries assembled in the grove of oak trees for the laying of the cornerstone of Ambrose Hall. The elaborate ceremonial that the Church prescribes for such an occasion was carried out by Bishop Cosgrove. It took place at 3 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon with a storm threatening. A crowd of about 2,000 persons was on hand to watch the event. The cornerstone itself, made from a fine block of the celebrated Anamosa stone, bears the following inscription:

“The seminary is dedicated to Almighty God and the ever Blessed Virgin Mary under the invocation of St. Ambrose. In the reign of our Holy Father, Leo XIII; Grover Cleveland, President of the United States; Henry Cosgrove, D.D., Bishop of Davenport; A. J. Schulte, President of the Seminary. Given under the Episcopal seal this 5th day of July, 1885.”

A copper box containing a copy of the dedication, the first and second prospectus of St. Ambrose, and recent editions of several local newspapers and national magazines were sealed in the cornerstone. The mayor gave a talk, short but complimentary. Father J. P. Ryan, pastor of St. Marguerite's, gave a sermon in which he said, among other things, “this little seed which we have planted here today will grow and develop, and its influence will be felt in the community, in the diocese and in the entire state.” It was a hopeful prophecy. It was quoted again when the Lewis Hall cornerstone was laid by the then president, Father W. L. Hannon. After the mayor had finished expressing his and the city's indebtedness to “our citizens of the Catholic faith” for establishing “a beneficial institution,” the storm broke. The crowd dispersed into the shelter of the builders' shed and to the porches of nearby houses. The bushes, which in later years were to come to conceal the cornerstone, have been cleared away and one is able even now to look at and to have a reminder of that stormy afternoon when so many grateful wishes, so many predictions, were made about the future of the College. In the some 90 years that have passed since

the cornerstone was laid, it is easy to see that some of those predictions and good wishes have come true. Others were simply characteristic of the elaborate rhetoric of speech-making at the end of the 19th century. Some others came true for a time and then faded away. After all, in human affairs, nothing is perfect.

There was now a brand-new building for the St. Ambrose students to begin their classes on November 2, 1885. It was a building that was not complete. Only two of the four stories of Ambrose Hall had been finished and the College continued to enroll only day students, that is, people who lived in the city or boarded at private homes near the College. This situation would change in 1887 when Bishop Cosgrove decided that the College was to become a boarding school. In a circular letter, written in June of that year, he stated:

“The time has come to give it a more definite character of stability by making it both a boarding and day school. The grounds upon which the seminary is located are both spacious and convenient, affording the students ample room for exercise, and the building itself is now being fitted up and furnished, so as to be ready to receive boarders by the beginning of September. Parents, therefore, who so far were reluctant to send their sons to St. Ambrose on account of their being obliged to board in the city, will no longer be deterred by this difficulty, as the students, boarding hereafter at the seminary, will be properly cared for by the reverend professors, who will keep a constant watch over each and every one.”

Expansion, as every bishop and college president finds out, means additional expense. And so, on Sunday, May 8, 1887, Bishop Cosgrove launched a fund drive in a speech at the cathedral, saying it was necessary to complete the seminary building “that it may be more attractive and that its students may be increased.” The bishop, eager for the work to be completed by the beginning of September, announced that he needed \$5,000. He emphasized that “St. Ambrose is a diocesan institution and ought to be provided with accommodations for 200 at least. The improvements in contemplation will render the seminary attractive for that number. As fast as more capacity becomes necessary, annexes will be erected.” Cosgrove further arranged to liquidate the \$15,000-to-\$20,000 debt required to complete the building. He instructed the priests to canvass the diocese for donations and that they should visit every parish. The bishop inaugurated the drive with a dona-

tion of \$500 and John L. Miles, one of the principal donors to Ambrose Hall, followed suit with a like amount. The bishop, at a priest's retreat some months later, announced that the total cost of the ground and building amounted to \$26,157.25 and of that amount, \$12,000 still had not been raised. A subscription list was taken up immediately among the priests. After it was completed, the total pledged from the group of about 80 priests amounted to \$5,555. Cosgrove was pleased, as well he might have been. Another source of fund-raising was thought of as well: for the first time we find the form for bequests appearing in the College catalog of that year.

The completed building contained a number of facilities. On the first floor there was a large dining room with a kitchen attached. A study hall for the day students plus several bathrooms were on the second floor. The library, rooms for the faculty and another study hall for the boarding students occupied the third floor. The boarding students lived on the top floor - some 30 of them - during the first years. The top floor also contained the chapel in the original building.

New arrivals since the laying of the cornerstone included Father J. I. A. Flannagan, who began as a faculty member and who would later become the second president of the College and vicar general of the diocese. In 1887, with the addition of boarding facilities, the Sisters of Humility came to St. Ambrose and took charge of the domestic work. They remained there until 1959, rendering faithful, efficient and often self-effacing service. They rarely drew attention to themselves, their names did not appear in articles about the school or college catalogs and, as a consequence, it is difficult to give them personal identities. Of those who came at the beginning, only the names of three are known: Sister Mary Peter, Sister Mary Ignatius and Sister Mary Genevieve. They were assisted by a Mrs. McDonough, whose son William McDonough was among the early St. Ambrose students ordained to the priesthood. Sister Mary Peter, who stayed at the College from 1887 until 1910, with the exception of a few years during which she taught at Neola, Iowa, was well remembered by one of her students who wrote in the *Catholic Messenger* in 1910: “We feel certain that no one who attended St. Ambrose College has forgotten Sister Mary Peter, and we might add that she has not forgotten them, for none knew the boys better than she.” Not the

least of the contributions of the sisters was probably some sort of maternal feminine atmosphere in what was, after all, an entirely masculine environment.

Despite the new facilities of Ambrose Hall, the real growth of the College by way of enrollment was not to come until after 1900. Between 1885 and 1891, enrollment varied from a low of 52 students in 1886-1887 to a high of 75 students in 1888-1889. During the 1890-1891 school year there were only 62 students. Attendance was still a catch-as-catch-can thing. Some came only for short periods, while others enrolled but continued to leave early in order to be home to carry out farming tasks. Of those who were enrolled during this period, about 33 percent of them were entered in the commercial course, which took two years. About 25 percent were preparatory students. Even the majority of those students in the classical curriculum were still on the high school level.

There was some sort of "commencement" ceremonies at the end of each year of the College's existence, and certificates or medals were provided for those who had completed a certain course or won a certain prize. The list of graduates itself, however, was very small. There were two or three for the classical course. Nearly all of them would continue studies for the priesthood. All but one of the classical graduates from 1887-1889 went on to the study of philosophy and theology. By 1889, in December, there were 10 graduates of these three years in major seminaries. The average graduating class for the commercial course would be four or five. Some of these would remain at St. Ambrose and graduate later from the classical course.

The teaching load from 1885 until 1891 was carried mainly by Father Schulte as president, Mr. Halligan as head of the commercial department, and by Father Flannagan, who had arrived in the fall of 1885. Father Flannagan was an instructor in Latin, English and algebra during his first years at the College. The catalogs also tell of him serving the function as disciplinarian in 1885-1887, prefect of studies from 1887 until 1891 and spiritual director 1887-1891. Through a great deal of job juggling and over-worked periods, these three managed to carry the College academically during its early years. There were some who helped part-time. A Father Robert Nolan served as master of discipline during the year 1887-1888, a Mr. Schillinger was an instructor in