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Building on a Firm Foundation

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Building on a Firm Foundation



Ame Vennema

Receiving accreditation

The fourth president of Hope College, Ame Vennema (1857-1925), served as the college leader from 1911-1918 and continued the emphasis on scholarly achievement that his predecessors had set forth before him. Vennema had graduated from Hope College in 1879 and was well aware of the importance of this trend both as a former student, faculty member and college leader.

One of his most important accomplishments was working with the faculty to obtain 1916 accreditation of Hope College by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools -- a very important accreditation for the college and one that is renewed to this day. Still, Vennema, who was an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) was distressed that most of its male graduates (Hope became coeducational in 1882) were not entering theological fields, but, instead, the sciences. This trend, while not huge, continued and has marked Hope College as one of the very best producers of undergraduate science majors.

Getting through the war

Vennema's goal of building the academic program on a firm foundation continued, but at a large financial price. When he took office, in 1911, the College was facing a \$25,000 debt brought on by the hiring of more faculty members, noticeably female, larger student enrollment, and maintenance of more academic buildings. Fortunately, both the decrease in the debt and an increase in endowment were seen by 1914, but progress on both was slow. Interrupting, this progress was the onset of World War I and the United States eventual involvement in it.

World War I, which the United States entered in April 1917, was the first major war faced by the college and her students. Initially, the Secretary of War and the college counseled students to stay in college until called into service under the Selective Service Act of May 1917. However, many Hope men left college before being drafted. In May 1918, the Hope College Bulletin reported that 81 Hope men had left college since the beginning of the war to enter their country's service. While the war raged in Europe, President Vennema decided to call it quits as the college's presi-

dent and resigned on April 24, 1918. He returned east to a pastorate in Passaic, N.J. and died there on April 26, 1925. His replacement, Edward D. Dimment (1876-1959) (class of 1898) and president from 1918 to 1931 would oversee the training of young men destined for service at home and abroad.

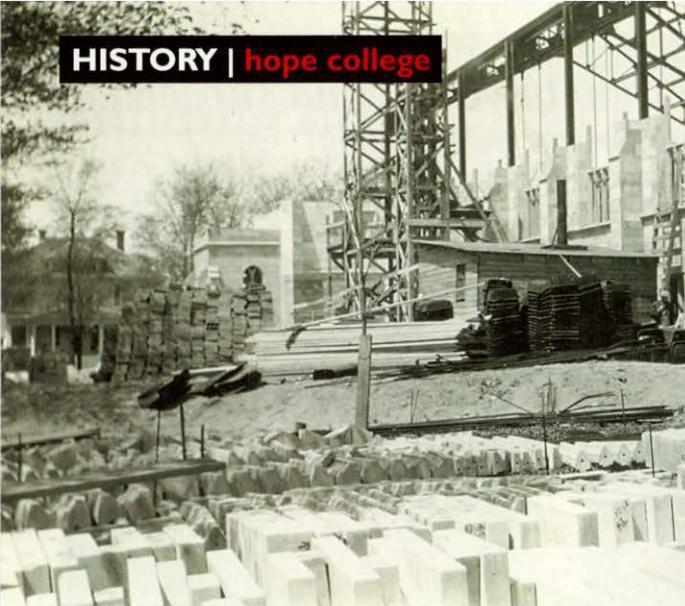


Hope College SATC Members

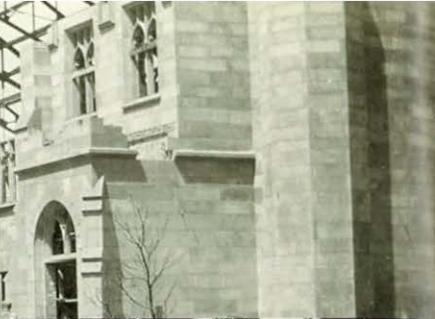
Military presence on campus

On October 1, 1918, the SATC unit, with a quota of 100 men, was formally instituted at Hope. The Hope College Council authorized the college president to make application for the establishment of a SATC unit after much discussion and with a great deal of reluctance. The action was seen as breaking all precedents and traditions and one that could have far-reaching consequences for the future. But, it was expected better physical training and general discipline would result from the experience. The men were formally inducted into the U.S. Army and were in uniform and under military discipline. Carnegie Gymnasium converted into a barracks, and an infirmary and dispensary were placed in Van Vleck Hall. A mess hall was situated on the third floor of Van Raalte Hall. Officers were appointed by the Army with a Lt. Jacobson as Commanding Officer. Daily infantry drills, marches, calisthenics and instruction in military science were instituted for members of the unit. Academic subjects were taught by regular members of the Hope faculty while military subjects were taught by army officers. The signing of the Armistice on Nov. 11, 1918, brought the war to an end, and the SAC unit was disbanded in December 1918.

Hope College also organized The Ceylon Cadet Corps during World War I, primarily to meet the military needs of the preparatory students and college students disqualified from membership in the SAC. This voluntary organization was commanded by Agminate Maniac, who led daily military drills for the approximately 40 students in the corps.



Hope College Memorial Chapel Under Construction 1928



Hope College Memorial Chapel Completed



Patriotic League Booth

Hope women contributed to the war effort through the Patriotic League that was organized in the fall of 1917 under the direction of the dean of women. The League organized a system of letter writing by Hope faculty and students to Hope men in the military and later sent “comfort kits,” Christmas boxes and New Testaments to them. In 1918, the

League, in cooperation with the city of Holland, sold \$15,000 worth of bonds during the Fourth Liberty Bond drive.

Changes under Dimment

In 1898, Edward Daniel Dimment returned to Hope College as a professor of Greek. Dimment was born in Chicago on Aug. 14, 1876. He entered Hope Preparatory School in 1888 and graduated from Hope College in 1896. He received his doctorate from the University of Chicago.



Edward Dimment

In addition to his professorship, Dimment also served as registrar and treasurer. He was appointed president of Hope College in 1918 and

continued in that capacity

until his resignation in 1931. During his presidency, funds were collected, and construction was completed on the Hope Memorial Chapel in 1929. After his resignation, Dimment returned to teaching economics until his retirement in 1948. While continuing to teach at Hope College, he also studied at Western Theological Seminary, and in 1935 he was ordained.

Dimment was involved in many activities outside of the college. At various times, he was a member of the board of trustees of Western Theological Seminary, president of the State Historical Society, head of the Michigan Authors Association, and served on the board of directors of a number of local businesses. He also wrote a play, *The Pilgrim*, in honor of Hope's 75th anniversary in 1941.

In addition to Dimment's introduction of the SATC, he also oversaw the doubling of the student enrollment, the change to a two-semester academic year, and curriculum changes that placed a greater emphasis on liberal arts learning. Another highlight was the separation of the Hope Preparatory School Program (of which he was a graduate) from that of the college. After his death in 1959, the Chapel was renamed Dimment Memorial Chapel to honor his fundraising efforts for the building.

For the first two articles on the history of Hope, go to www.urbanstmagazine.com and click on the PDFs of our Feb/Mar and April/May issue.