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Keeping True to the Cathedral Within: A Case Study of Wheaton Academy and the Initiation, Development, and Fulfillment of Its Christian Saga of Social Justice

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

KEEPING TRUE TO THE CATHEDRAL WITHIN:
A CASE STUDY OF WHEATON ACADEMY AND THE
INITIATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND FULFILLMENT OF ITS
CHRISTIAN SAGA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

BARBARA DILL-VARGA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2011

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To those who supported me with their time, their encouragement, their wisdom, and their love, I dedicate this work. I would especially like to express my gratitude to:

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Barb Dill-Varga

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT	x
INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose.....	5
Need for the Study	5
CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE	7
Hargreaves and Fink’s Sustainable Leadership	7
Burtchaell’s <i>Dying of the Light</i>	9
Robert Benne’s Framework in <i>Quality with Soul</i>	11
David Whetten and Stuart Albert’s <i>Organizational Identity</i>	15
Burton Clarke’s Organizational Saga	16
Crosswalk of Four Frameworks.....	21
A Compelling Central Vision That Matters.....	22
A View That is Distinctive and Demands Action.....	22
A Vision That Endures Over Time Because Key Personnel are Empowered Through Distributive Leadership.....	23
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	26
What is an Academy?	26
The Age of the Academies.....	28
The Second Great Awakening and Origins of the Vision of Social Justice	31
A Few Academies From History	32
The Phillips Academies, 1781 to Present	32
Oberlin Academy, 1833-1916.....	34
Elgin Academy, 1839 to Present Day	36
The Decline of the Academies	38
The Legacy of the Academies.....	40
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	41
Historical Inquiry	41
Case Study	42
Organizational Life Stages as Organizing Metaphor.....	45
Research Questions	47
Primary Sources and Secondary Sources.....	48
Primary Sources	49
Secondary Sources	50
Interviews.....	51
Participant Selection	52

Theory-based Sampling	52
Snowball or Chain-referral Sampling	53
Invitation to Participate.....	53
Interview Procedures	54
Data Analysis.....	54
Researcher’s Qualifications and Limitations	55

CHAPTER IV: INITIATION OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY

FROM 1853 TO 1949.....	59
The Story Begins.....	59
Jonathan Blanchard’s Ancestral Heritage of Reform and Protest	59
Christian Commitment, Faith, and Early Stand Against Moral Evils.....	61
School and Societal Reformer	63
Abolitionism	66
Anti-Masonry	71
College President	71
Birth of an Institution, 1853.....	76
Birth of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in America	78
Reverend John C. Cross, 1853	80
Reverend Charles F. Winship, 1855	81
Reverend J. A. Martling, 1856.....	82
Reverend Lucius C. Matlock, 1856	82
The Blanchards	83
Jonathan Blanchard, 1860.....	83
Origins of the Grassy Knoll Saga	85
Charles A. Blanchard.....	92
Blanchard-Fischer Dynasty.....	95
Charles Blanchard and the National Christian Association.....	96
Fundraising	98
Darien A. Straw, 1882-1910	100
William F. Rice, 1915-1922.....	101
Edward R. Schell, 1928-1949	103
Academy Moves to Prince Crossing Road in West Chicago, 1945.....	106
LeTourneau Gymnasium, 1948	107
Clyde S. Kilby’s Study of the Academy, 1944.....	108
Significance of the Move in 1945.....	113
Organizational Ethos: <i>Statement of Faith</i> and the <i>Standards of Conduct</i>	115
Standards of Conduct.....	122
College Motto “For Christ and His Kingdom”	129

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF THE INITIATION OF THE VISION:

THE ACADEMY FROM 1853 TO 1949	131
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VI: DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY	
FROM 1950 TO 1988.....	141
Reverend Robert L. Gilbert, 1950.....	141
The Great Revival, 1950.....	141
Alumni Chapel Dedication, 1951	143
Cyril D. Garrett, 1952	144
The Centennial Celebration, 1953	144
Letter to President Edman About Teacher Turnover, 1953.....	148
Mel Johnson, 1955	150
Emancipation from the College, 1958	152
Back Home Again, 1961.....	157
Wendell Lovelace, 1960	158
Reemphasizing Behaviors and Practices, 1960	159
John Blanchard, 1962.....	160
Separate Academy Board Established by College, 1964.....	162
James Fenton, 1965.....	164
Gil Dodds.....	165
Wheaton College’s Increasing Concerns	166
By-Laws for Wheaton Christian High School, 1970	185
Charles Strobeck, Board Member.....	187
The Dark Ages	189
William C. Newell, 1974	190
Fire Marshal Report on Violations, 1976	191
Wheaton Christian High School – Alumni Association, 1978	192
The Gieser Family and the Wheaton Eye Clinic	193
Paul “Pep” Peterson, 1982	195
Dr. James Watson, 1985	196
Henrietta VanDerMolen and the Mortgage, 1988	197
Looking Back to 1981: Mr. Jon Keith – A Glimmer of Light.....	199
Mac Airhart.....	203
David Roth, 1988.....	212
 CHAPTER VII: ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY FROM 1950 TO 1988.....	 213
 CHAPTER VIII: FULFILLMENT OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY	
FROM 1989 TO 2011	220
Dr. David Roth, 1989.....	220
Reconstituting the School and its Mission, 1989-90	223
<i>For Christ and His Kingdom to Soli Deo Gloria</i>	226
Wheaton Academy Immutables.....	227
Five “Immutables” from Jon Keith.....	228
First Immutable: Living Curriculum Teachers	229
Second Immutable: Mature Culture.....	230
Third Immutable: Parent Partnership.....	231

Fourth Immutable: Spiritual Culture.....	231
Fifth Immutable: Being an “AND Institution”	232
Living Curriculum Teachers	233
The Napkin and the Yearbook	234
Teacher Hiring Requirements	236
Double-Teamers and a New Design for Teacher Evaluation	238
Winterim Program Launched, 1990-91	240
140 th Anniversary Chapel Address by Gene Frost, 1993.....	241
Stones of Remembrance Chapel Talk, 1994.....	243
Some Stones, Not So Remembered	244
Wheaton Christian High School Reclaims Original Name, 1994-95	246
Letter to Parents About Name Change	249
The Foundation of New Era Philanthropy, 1995	250
Financial Need – The Do’s and Don’ts.....	252
Student Enrollment and Demand on Upward Track.....	254
Materials Provided to Prospective Students, 1995-96	254
Student Application, Signing the Pledge	256
Vision 2003 Campaign, 1998	258
The Zambia Project and a Growing Sense of Social Justice, 2002	258
Project Moyo.....	260
Local Service Initiatives Developing.....	261
<i>Least</i>	261
Growth of Wheaton Academy’s Culture of Service	262
Defining the Soul of Wheaton Academy as the Torch is Passed, 2006.....	263
Dr. Gene Frost, 2006.....	270
Frost’s <i>Learning from the Best</i>	272
Abolishment of the Wheaton Academy Corporation.....	275
October 2007 <i>Transforming Every Student: The Campaign for Wheaton</i> <i>Academy</i>	277
Heritage Field House Prayer Walk, 2008	278
Heritage Project, 2009	279
Intentional Enrollment and Screening of Student Applications	279
International Student Program Increases Global Awareness, 2008.....	281
January Retreat, a Time of Organizational Reflection and Visioning 2011	282
The Work Still to Be Done	285
 CHAPTER IX: ANALYSIS OF THE FULFILLMENT OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY FROM 1989 TO 2011	 286
 CHAPTER X: ANSWERS TO THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH QUESTIONS ...	 296
 CHAPTER XI: SUSTAINING OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS	 301
 CONCLUSION.....	 309

APPENDIX A: LETTER REQUESTING INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION	311
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION	313
APPENDIX C: SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH	315
APPENDIX D: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT MEMBER’S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH.....	318
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	322
APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	324
APPENDIX G: EIGHT STAGES IN THE LIFE OF AN ORGANIZATION.....	326
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	328
VITA.....	345

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Crosswalk of Four Frameworks: Benne, Hargreaves/Fink, Whetten/ Albert, and Clarke	25
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on a case study of Wheaton Academy, a nondenominational Christian high school in West Chicago, Illinois. This study seeks to understand, through a study of its organizational saga, how and why this antebellum academy has survived for over 157 years and to what extent it has been able to maintain its founding fathers' Christian vision of social justice. Robert Benne's framework, focused on Vision, Ethos, and People as detailed in *Quality with Soul*, provides a useful lens to organize the study through three phases of the life of the school's saga: initiation, development, and fulfillment.

The central research questions are: 1) What was the original vision for the Academy? 2) In what ways can this vision be defined as a Christian vision of social justice? 3) To what extent has it been maintained or altered throughout its history? 4) What key educational leadership decisions were made that ensured the sustainability of the original vision? 5) How does Robert Benne's framework of Vision, Ethos, and People relate to the success of sustainability of purpose? 6) What is the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy? 7) When was it initiated and by whom? 8) What key components from Burton Clarke's work supporting fulfillment of that saga are to be found in the evidence for this institution? 9) What is the significance of this study to today's educational leader?

This study utilized a two-pronged qualitative case study methodology. The first prong focused on an examination of historical primary source documents and related secondary sources. The second focus included the interviewing of five key individuals, using 12 open-ended questions. The historical data and interview data was corroborated and triangulated with information gleaned from secondary sources that exist to distill commonalities addressing the research questions at hand.

INTRODUCTION

The cathedral of Milan is the second largest Gothic cathedral in the world. After more than five hundred years of construction, from 1386 to 1887, the interior is as spare and simple as the façade is crowded and ornate... All day long, Milanese on their way to or from work or market pour in for prayer or reflection. Many are regulars, so accustomed to the towering spires outside and the brilliant stained glass within that they no more look up than New Yorkers do walking by the Empire State Building. When I step back inside, the cathedral is still empty; so vast is the space that one hundred people fill it no more successfully than do five.

Of at least one thing I'm certain: The builders of the cathedral did not consider inspiration and faith as by products or fringe benefits of their work. Rather, it was the core purpose, the essential, uncompromisable ingredient of the entire architecture and design. Every other consideration was secondary to this. One can't stand in the aisles, dwarfed by the thirty-six massive pillars, staring at the unfathomable vaults and buttresses, and not know this to be true.

A cathedral of this magnificence cannot be built without people believing in it so deeply and so truly that their belief becomes contagious. It had to have taken more than salesmanship and communication skills to convince citizens across five centuries to bring the vision of this cathedral to fruition. There had to have been an authenticity that resonated in the hearts of others.

The vast majority of those who worked on this (and every other) cathedral did so knowing they would not live to see the final, finished achievement. This didn't diminish their dedication or craftsmanship. The evidence suggests it enhanced it.

Cathedral building required sharing strength on a scale never seen before or perhaps since. ...Somehow, it had been both communicated and understood that it wasn't just that building a truly great cathedral would require everyone to share their strength, but rather that everyone sharing their strength would result in a truly great cathedral....Think of all that went into building a cathedral: muscle, surely; ingenuity, vision, will. Layer upon layer of knowledge—of design, architecture, physics—accumulated over the years and was passed along through generations....Is

there any doubt that blood and tears mixed with the sweat that spilled into ancient soil during its centuries of construction, that the builders devoted their entire lives to it without ever being able to see their work finished, or that entire fortunes were sacrificed on its behalf? The story of any single aspect of it...reads like an epic. And so it surrounds us like an enormous gift that we can never repay, a gift not of architecture, but of humanity. That is what we're feeling, what catches our breath. We become the custodians of a bond between ourselves and the people who shared and sacrificed for our pleasure and benefit. That is what touches and transforms us, what quickens the beats of our hearts.¹

About three decades before the finishing touches were put on this cathedral in Milan in 1887, a group of Christian families, not unlike those medieval visionaries, came together to publicly embrace a Christian vision of social justice for what would later become Wheaton College and Wheaton Academy. From a published account written by the 1935 social studies class of Miss Gudrun Thorlakson, now housed in the archives at Wheaton Academy, we learn that:

The Illinois Institute [Wheaton College and the Academy's first name] was organized for the children of abolitionists. The reformers desired to have a place that taught the principles they prized, and that did not smother out by repression or silence the working out of the ideals instilled into them by home training. The founders wanted a school where science and morals were taught from the standpoint of Christianity and the Bible, and which in turn would glorify God by bringing a consistent testimony to Him. These ideals began to be realized when the work was first started on the main building. The founders kneeled in the prairie grass on the summit of the gradually sloping hill now crowned by the stately edifice known as Blanchard Hall. They dedicated the knoll and all that should be upon it to that God with whom they had boldly gone into the thickest of the fight, not only for the freedom of human bodies, but for the freedom of human souls from the bondage and penalty of sin. This then was the

¹Bill Shore, *The Cathedral Within: Transforming Your Life by Giving Something Back* (New York: Random House Publishers, 1999), 12-18.

foundation upon which the Academy was first established, upon which it still stands, and upon which by the grace of God, it will continue to stand.² A somewhat more stylized—almost mythic—account of this dedication was

found by this 1935 social studies class in a copy of one of the first publications of Wheaton College. It was a monthly publication known as “The Voice of our Young People,” in which appeared a series of articles entitled, “The Book of the Chronicles of Wheaton College.” Using parallel language to that of a Biblical account, it tells the history of the college:

These be the men whose mind the Lord stirred up, to rear unto him a Temple of Learning, whose principles from the foundation stone to the crowning pinnacle should be those of Justice and Equality—an institution decidedly reformatory and progressive in its character, whose efforts should tend to the destruction of all secret abominations, and the overthrow of spiritual wickedness in high places....

...And they came and encamped upon the plains of Wheaton. And they said, ‘Go to, now, let us rear here a temple whose influence shall extend from the river unto the ends of the earth. And let everyone who is of a willing mind, and who hath a heart to do the work, give for the building of the house, as seemeth good unto him, That our children be not as fools that hate instruction, but that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, and that our daughters may be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace.’³

Wheaton Academy, a private nondenominational Christian high school in West Chicago, Illinois was first founded in 1853 by this group of families in Wheaton, Illinois intent on creating an educational environment for their children more in tune with their religious values and beliefs. This first floundering high school institution, originally

²James Black, Everett Gray, Clayton Howard, Christine Oury, Peter Stam III, and Jeannette Wetherbee, *History of Wheaton College Academy*, ed. Gudrun Thorlakson (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Academy, 1935).

³Ibid., 7-8.

chartered as Illinois Institute, was rescued in 1860 by abolitionist and former Knox College president Jonathan Blanchard who decided to subsume the high school as a preparatory academy under the wing of a newly formed college soon to carry the name of Wheaton College. Together these institutions—the Academy and the College—physically and legally coexisted until 1945 when the College trustees purchased the abandoned Prince Crossing School for Crippled Children from the University of Chicago and moved the Academy to its new home in West Chicago. Though it was some years in discussion, a legal and financial separation occurred in 1970 when the College decided to close the doors on its involvement with the Academy. While not the first time the Academy was rescued by dedicated citizens and parents, it may have been the most important moment that eventually ensured this antebellum academy—and its original Christian vision of social justice—would survive and grow. And grow it did. Today it is recognized as one of the finest private Christian high schools in the country with an enrollment well over 600. The commitment to its mission continues as it received the largest single alumni gift of \$2.85 million in the school’s then 154-year history to embark on a campaign in support of *Transforming Every Student: The Campaign for Wheaton Academy*, a \$12.8 million fundraising campaign the Academy publicly launched on October 30, 2007. Driven even today by the earlier 1853 vision of religious prairie families seeking God’s will, this campaign sought to fund not only facility improvements, but build a foundation of funding to attract what it calls “living curriculum teachers” who model what they believe, as well as to provide scholarships for students in need.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation was to learn about how and why an educational organization, such as Wheaton Academy, has been able to sustain the Christian vision of social justice first established by its founding fathers over 157 years after its creation. What are the decisions that educational and organizational leaders made which were essential to keeping the original mission intact, given the numerous distractions and threats to its stated objectives and to its very survival? How have they been able to ensure that the vision of the “cathedral” originally conceived at the founding of the institution is actually realized?

Need for the Study

Those who found institutions and organizations—be they educational or commercial—do so with great vision and energy. They are driven to give birth to something greater than themselves because of a hoped for better future. For many, the realization of that vision will not be in their lifetimes and because of that it requires a different mindset. Building a cathedral, be it the Cathedral of Milan, or the vision behind an antebellum school, requires a different kind of thinking which some have called, “Cathedral Think.” “Cathedral thinking is the opposite of revolutionary thinking. Revolutionaries want big changes really fast. The cathedral builders didn’t think of life that way at all. When [we] bring cathedral thinking to our own lives, [it means] living

strategically, rather than simply day to day. [It is about] leaving an inheritance for the next generation.”⁴

Crucial then to all who work in these areas is an understanding of how to grow and sustain an organization in such a way as to maintain integrity with the founding fathers’ purposes throughout the life of the organization. So many businesses and educational institutions lose their way when buffeted by numerous internal and external forces in an ever-changing world. Educational leaders, in particular, need to understand the choices before them and the significance they carry now and in the future for sustaining the vision of their schools.

A detailed study of the evolution of Wheaton Academy and key educational leadership decisions made from its point of origin to the present day provides a case study of issues in sustainability which, when better understood, can inform both private and public school educational leaders in best practices.

⁴Pastor Howard Batson, “Cathedral Think: Dedicatory Sermon Celebrating the Completion of the Master Plan,” Sermon delivered at First Baptist Church, Armarillo, TX, on November 7, 2010, <http://www.fbcamarillo.org/templates/cusfbcamarillo/details.asp?id=21033&fetch=32422> (accessed February, 2011).

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Hargreaves and Fink's Sustainable Leadership

Sustainability is a common theme of discussion today as environmentalists attempt to heighten world awareness to the consequences of the world's insatiable appetite for limited resources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency states that sustainability means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹

Interestingly, due to the growing work and research of Andy Hargreaves and Dan Fink (2003), *sustainability* as a concept has taken on new meaning for educators who are conducting research on change initiatives. Hargreaves references "a Spencer Foundation funded study of educational change over three decades in eight high schools in the U.S. and Canada, as seen through the eyes of over 200 teachers and administrators who worked there in the 1970's, 80's and 90's"² and their conclusion that leadership decisions about succession and sustainability were key ingredients in the successful implementation of long-term change initiatives. Hargreaves states that: "Sustainable leadership and

¹United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Sustainability," 2008, <http://www.epa.gov/Sustainability/2008> (accessed 2008).

²Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink, "The Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership," 2003, http://www.msde.maryland.gov/NR/rdonlyres/F7D49A8D-E9D0-4C49-9DE6-3A878BC9F1F4/18748/seven_principles.pdf (accessed January 24, 2011), 2.

improvement are more than matters of mere endurance, of making things last.”³ He argues that “sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts. It is a shared responsibility that does not unduly deplete human or financial resources, and that cares for and avoids exerting negative damage on the surrounding educational and community environment. Sustainable leadership has an activist engagement with the forces that affect it, and builds an educational environment of organizational diversity that promotes cross-fertilization of good ideas and successful practices in communities of shared learning and development.”⁴ Hargreaves identifies seven principles of sustainable leadership as follows:

- 1) Sustainable leadership creates and preserves sustaining learning; sustaining learning is learning that matters, that lasts and that engages students intellectually, socially and emotionally (Glickman 2002; Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003);
- 2) Sustainable leadership secures success over time as leaders deliberately plan for their own obsolescence by ‘creating chains of influence that connect their actions to those of their predecessors and successors’;
- 3) Sustainable leadership sustains the leadership of others by distributing leadership throughout the school’s professional community –so it can carry the torch once the principal has gone, and soften the blow of principal succession (Spillane, Halverson, and Drummond, 2001);
- 4) Sustainable leadership addresses issues of social justice so its focus moves beyond maintaining improvement in one’s own school to taking responsibility to the schools and students that one’s own actions affect in the wider environment;
- 5) Sustainable leadership develops rather than depletes human and material resources by providing intrinsic rewards and extrinsic incentives to attract and

³Ibid., 3.

⁴Ibid.

retain the best and brightest leaders who are also given time to network and support each other and their successors;

- 6) Sustainable leadership does not embrace standardization, but rather develops environmental diversity and capacity to promote learning from one another's diverse best practices;
- 7) Sustainable leadership undertakes activist engagement with the environment as it chooses to influence the environment that influences it. Mainly it is not leaders who let their schools down, but the systems in which they lead. Sustainable leadership certainly needs to become a commitment of all school leaders. If change is to matter, spread, and last, sustainable leadership must also be a fundamental priority of the systems in which leaders do their work.⁵

Burtchaell's *Dying of the Light*

Examining the degree to which institutions of higher education have sustained their version of the Christian vision is at the heart of a number of studies. Often referenced J.T. Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* examines a plethora of these institutions and concludes that the majority have fallen under the influence of a secular society, unable to sustain the original vision. "His study shows how nearly every Christian college in America that breaks away from accountability to the church eventually drifts away from Biblical authority and has either left or is on its way to leaving Christianity itself."⁶ His voluminous tome looks in detail about the journeys many of America's most prestigious institutions of higher learning have taken away from their founding visions due in large part to leadership decisions made at crucial junctures. Included are detailed analyses of

⁵Ibid., 3-10.

⁶Andy Chambers, "Christian Colleges--Accountable, Not Autonomous," *Baptist2Baptist*, 2001, <http://www.baptist2baptist.net/b2article.asp?ID=219> (accessed 2008).

the following colleges and universities and their relationships with respective denominations: Dartmouth College and Beloit College (Congregationalists); Lafayette College and Davidson College (Presbyterians); Millsaps College and Ohio Wesleyan University (Methodists); Wake Forest University, Virginia Union University, Linfield College (Baptists); Gettysburg College, St. Olaf College, Concordia University (Lutherans); Boston College, College of New Rochelle, and St. Mary's College of California (The Catholics); and Azusa Pacific University and Dordt College (Evangelicals). Though each institution has a particularized story, they share many commonalities which become obvious in hindsight. In his work, Burtchaell summarizes that:

The elements of the slow but apparently irrevocable cleavage of colleges from churches were many. The church was replaced as a financial patron by alumni, foundations, philanthropists, and the government. The regional accrediting associations, the alumni, and the government replaced the church as the primary authorities to whom the college would give an accounting of its stewardship. The study of their faith became academically marginalized, and the understanding of religion was degraded by translation into reductive banalities for promotional use. Presidential hubris found fulfillment in cultivating the colleges to follow the academic pacesetters, which were selective state and independent universities. The faculties transferred their primary loyalties from their college to their disciplines and their guild, and were thereby antagonistic to any competing norms of professional excellence related to the church...why did these emancipations, which were to be radical and apparently irreversible, convey to their sponsors little sense of drastic change, and no sense of loss? Usually, though not always, the change of a college or university's character went largely unnoticed because of the stability for the cultural symbols, which altered more slowly.⁷

⁷James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 837.

It would be easy to accept his conclusions, resigned to the eventual loss of a Christian vision in all educational institutions, were it not for the research and work of Robert Benne who argues that a different perspective is needed and a more inclusive set of examples needs to be examined.

Robert Benne's Framework in *Quality with Soul*

Robert Benne examines in *Quality With Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* “why and how six schools from six religious traditions have kept their version of the Christian vision publicly relevant in all dimensions of the life and mission of their schools.”⁸ He characterizes these schools as being relatively successful in the maintenance of “both quality and soul”⁹ in a milieu of increasing secularization. His work includes an analysis of the following colleges: Calvin, Wheaton, Valparaiso, Notre Dame, Baylor, and St. Olaf.

Benne creates a three-part framework that he uses to analyze the current vitality of the original Christian mission at these six institutions. It is a framework that allows one to place a particular university on a continuum where abandonment of mission and heritage lie at one end and complete integrity to the Christian origins lies at the other. The “three components of the Christian tradition [at the center of his framework] which

⁸Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, Co., 2001), ix.

⁹Ibid.

must be publicly relevant [are the institution's] vision, its ethos, and the Christian persons who bear that vision and ethos."¹⁰

In this context, *vision*, as Benne says, is "Christianity's articulated account of reality...a comprehensive account encompassing all of life; it provides the umbrella of meaning under which all facets of life and learning are gathered and interpreted...The Christian vision is, for believing Christians, at least, *unsurpassable*; it cannot be replaced by a better account, and therefore for believers its essential core persists through time. It claims to be the vehicle of ultimate truth, such that if another account of life surpasses the Christian story in the lives of believers, they no longer legitimately claim to be Christians...[it is] central to life. It definitively addresses all the essential questions of life: meaning, purpose, and conduct."¹¹ He continues to describe that the vision is based in the Bible and church history and contains within it beliefs about the origins and destiny of the world. He reiterates that "its intellectual tradition also contains a theory about how revelation and reason are related."¹²

Transcending just an intellectual tradition, Christianity, however, is more than just what we believe and think about. As Benne says, "the account it gives of reality is also lived, embodied, and expressed in an *ethos*, a way of life."¹³ Each branch or tradition of Christianity finds its expression of its vision to be uniquely expressed through an ethos

¹⁰Ibid. 6.

¹¹Ibid., 6-7.

¹²Ibid., 7.

¹³Ibid.

that defines itself in “practice of worship, the heritage of music, the many traditions in the liturgical year with its holidays and commemoration of exemplary figures.”¹⁴ Ethos also involves a call to moral action, a practicing of virtues such as humility or hospitality, obedience to “God to exercise ...gifts in service to others through specific roles”¹⁵ or religious vocations. Finally ethos has to do with how “we should live together—rules governing issues of truthfulness, marriage, and sexual life, dress, demeanor, and other matters of morality.”¹⁶

The third leg of the framework is the “Christian persons who bear that vision and ethos. Without committed persons, a religious tradition is merely an historical artifact. Persons are the bearers of a living religious tradition as individuals and as participants in churches, church-related institutions, and associations of that tradition.”¹⁷

He summarizes by stressing the importance of all three components by saying: “The vision must be relevant in the intellectual life and give theoretical justification and guidance for the ethos. The ethos of the tradition must in some relevant way condition and affect the life of the college or university. And persons who bear the vision and the ethos must participate influentially in the life of the school.”¹⁸

Unfortunately for many educational institutions, sustaining the original vision of the founding fathers is not that easy. Benne says one could oversimplify the problem and

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 7.

¹⁶Ibid., 8.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

simply state that “not enough committed and competent persons were present at crucial times to insist that the sponsoring heritage be publicly and fittingly relevant in all the facets of college life,¹⁹ but he quickly develops an argument that educational institutions do not deliberately lose their focus. Christian colleges do not deliberately set out on a path of secularization; rather there are many internal and external forces at work which cause this “dilution of denominational identity.”²⁰ External factors include a coming to terms with a postmodern intellectual movement that calls into question central Christian truths as well as the reality of survival in the educational marketplace and the need to appeal to a broader cross section of students.²¹ Internal forces Benne points to include such things as “the gradual decline in the numbers of persons from the sponsoring religious tradition inhabiting the Board, administration, faculty, and student body,”²² the lack of financial support from associated churches, and an increasingly “deficient set of theological understandings that leads to a “crisis of faith.” Benne states, “Deep down, both church leaders and faculty members no longer believed the Christian faith to be comprehensive, unsurpassable, and central. Other sources of inspiration, knowledge, and moral guidance slowly displaced Christianity. In that context, secularization was simply the natural next step.”²³

¹⁹Ibid., 19.

²⁰Ibid., 32.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 46.

²³Ibid., 47.

Benne's important work moves from this framework useful in his analysis of six colleges to a logical set of "strategies for maintenance and renewal" derived from his understanding of those educational institutions that have "maintained a robust connection with vision, ethos, and persons of their sponsoring heritage."²⁴

Benne's three-part framework focusing on Vision, Ethos, and People --including his delineation of internal and external factors—is a useful construct through which to analyze the evolutionary saga of Wheaton Academy during its 157-year journey.

David Whetten and Stuart Albert's *Organizational Identity*

Sustaining an organizational vision—be it secular or Christian—has to do with, as well, an understanding of theories about organizational identity which unquestionably must start with a reading of the landmark research by David A. Whetten and Stuart Albert, best displayed in their often cited article, "Organizational Identity."²⁵ Albert and Whetten define the components that make up an organization's identity as those features which are "central, distinctive, and enduring."²⁶ Their work explains that organizations may have multiple identities and that their "issues of identity come to the fore [for intense scrutiny and possible reevaluation] during six different stages of an organization's life cycle: during its formation or birth as an organization, upon the loss of the founder; on the accomplishment of an organization's *raison d'être*; during a period of rapid growth;

²⁴Ibid., 177.

²⁵Stuart Albert and David Whetten, "Organizational Identity," In *Organizational Identity: A Reader*, eds., Mary Jo and Majken Schultz Hatch (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004), chapter six.

²⁶Ibid.

when there is an anticipated change of status brought about through a merger or divestiture; and lastly, during a period of retrenchment.”²⁷ They also propose that “a discrepancy between how insiders and outsiders view the organization can affect organizational health...and its ability to generate political and resource support necessary to guarantee its survival.”²⁸ Also of interest is their discussion of how young organizations, often founded by the ideological vision of a charismatic leader(s), are successful over time as full scale movements when they seek routinization of charisma. They must establish formal organizational structures, rules, and procedures to survive and grow.²⁹ Albert and Stuart cite Pettigrew’s (1979) study of English public (our private) schools. “He found that public schools that were the most successful through their initial growth and maturity phases replaced their entrepreneurial founder with a “steady state manager” capable of routinizing what initially began as an ideologically driven educational program.”³⁰

Burton Clarke’s Organizational Saga

Albert and Whetten’s focus on the “central, distinctive, and enduring” features that together comprise the identity of an organization paved the way for Burton Clarke’s research and work in organizational identity which he took in a somewhat different direction. The distinctive storied past of Wheaton Academy is what Burton Clarke would

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

call an “organizational saga.”³¹ Students of literature recognize the term “saga” as it relates to medieval Icelandic and Nordic epic stories of heroic proportion. These narratives, emotionally told and retold through subsequent generations, usually focused on memorable accomplishments of a hero or nation and helped to solidify the identity of citizens with their nation and its legendary past. More than just a history of the events, places, and people, the saga holds up a core set of beliefs that are distinctive to that proud group of people, who over time find their bonds to each other and the nation strengthened because of it.³²

Burton Clarke, in his 1970 study of three colleges—Reed, Swarthmore, and Antioch—applied a similar concept of saga to organizations, in this case, post-secondary academic institutions, and demonstrated its positive influence on participation of the members of the organization as well as on the ultimate effectiveness of the organization. According to Philip Aust, Clarke’s findings “substantiate that historical events play an important role in how organizational members perceive themselves and what they convey to an external audience.”³³

³¹Burton R. Clarke, *The Distinctive College*, 4th ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

³²*Ibid.*, 197.

³³Philip Jerold Aust, “Communicated Values as Indicators of Organizational Identity: A Method for Organizational Assessment and its Application in a Case Study,” *Communication Studies* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 519.

Clarke's research found that the development of organizational sagas had two phases: initiation and fulfillment.³⁴ Initiation is how the saga begins. According to Paul Selznick, "The saga is initially a strong purpose, conceived and enunciated by a single man or a small cadre whose first task is to find an [organizational] setting that is open, or can be opened to a special effort."³⁵ This saga initiation can occur with the founding of a brand new organization, or at a time when the existing organization is in a state of crisis or decay and therefore is more open to a change agent, or when all agree that to thrive, evolutionary change is necessary.³⁶ This initiation should remind one of Whetten and Stuart's delineation of the first phase or birth of the young organization. Fulfillment of the initiated saga only occurs if the following key components to its development are present, are aligned to the initial purpose, and are operative: personnel, program, social base, student subculture, and imagery.³⁷ Personnel, as Clarke states, begin with a "key group of believers [such as] the senior faculty. When they are hostile to a new idea, its attenuation is likely; when they are passive, its success is weak; and when they are devoted to it, a saga is probable."³⁸ If commitment exists, these senior members will carry the saga forward even after the initiator is gone, by investing themselves in the change, taking some credit for it, and making sure it becomes part of the routines of the

³⁴Burton R. Clarke, "The Organizational Saga in Higher Education," in *Qualitative Studies of Organizations: The Administrative Science Quarterly Series in Organization Theory and Behavior*, edited by J. Van Maanen (Thousand Oaks, CA: Publications, 1998), 197, 199.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 200.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*, 202.

³⁸*Ibid.*

institution. They are also willing to protect it against newcomers who may attempt to turn the institution in a different direction and may get involved in recruiting the next leader who will continue to work with them to “consolidate” the initiative. “The faculty believers also replace themselves through socialization and selective recruitment and retention. They shield the distinctive effort from erosion or deflection by new potential innovators.”³⁹ This is, of course, in agreement with Benne’s focus on People and Hargreave’s discussions on succession planning.

The organization’s “program” and practices are the second component, which must help to express the saga during this fulfillment stage. Clarke says it may be as simple as “distinctive” curricula, a unique set of requirements, or particular teaching methodology that develops. This distinctive program then “becomes a set of communal symbols and rituals, invested with meaning,”⁴⁰ which helps to set apart the organization in the eyes of those within it and those who observe from the outside. It fuels the saga of distinctiveness, the latter term which is also prevalent in Whetten and Stuart’s research.

Two other components that are essential are labeled by Clarke as the social base—usually alumni—and the student subculture. The alumni carry with them “thoughts which remain centered on the past, rooted in the days when, as students, they participated intimately in the unique ways and accomplishments of the campus.”⁴¹ They are not involved in the present challenges and so find it easier to embrace the values,

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., 203.

beliefs, and emotional history most likely still held by older faculty members who were their teachers in days gone by. They are tellers of the saga and pass it along to their children. Beyond the senior faculty and this group of alumni, there is a very important group Clarke identifies as the student subculture. “To become and remain a saga, a change must be supported by the student subculture over decades, and the ideology of the subculture must integrate with the central ideas of the believing administrators and faculty. When the students define themselves as personally responsible for upholding the image of the college, then a design or plan has become an organizational saga.”⁴²

The signs of fulfillment are present in the final component, the imagery of saga. Saga is expressed as a “generalized tradition in statues and ceremonies, written histories and current catalogues, even in an ‘air about the place’ felt by people,”⁴³ says Clarke. These symbolic images, mascots, mottos, ritualistic events, help to reinforce and rehearse—for all who belong—the special distinctive story that Clarke calls the saga.

Clarke’s work revealed that the value of a saga to an organization are the resulting bonds of trust and extreme loyalty created which creates an environment with a “competitive edge in recruiting and maintain personnel and helps it to avoid the vicious cycle in which some actual or anticipated erosion of organizational strength leads to the loss of some personnel, which leads to further decline and loss. Loyalty causes individuals to stay with a system, to save and improve it rather than to leave to serve their

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 204.

self interest elsewhere.”⁴⁴ Hargreaves would identify this as sustainability. Those who are part of such an organization feel proud and lucky to be participants and thus devote themselves more completely toward advancing the original mission. In short, they are happy to contribute to the building of a cathedral.

Burton Clarke’s theories regarding the organizational saga have been readily applied to numerous institutions of higher education such as the University of Michigan and to corporate identities such as Saturn Corporation, but a search has not yielded any such application to primary or secondary educational institutions. This researcher located and emailed Dr. Clarke, who, though terminally ill in 2008, communicated, through his wife, and responded that to his knowledge no one has conducted research in these areas of secondary education, so this study of Wheaton Academy will contribute something new to this field of research regarding organizational sagas.⁴⁵

Crosswalk of Four Frameworks

After carefully reading and synthesizing the core elements of the work of Hargreaves and Fink, Benne, Whetten and Albert, and Clarke, this researcher has been able to distill some important commonalities in their theoretical frameworks about how organizations develop and sustain their vision of the cathedral they hope someday will come to life (see Figure 1).

⁴⁴Ibid., 205.

⁴⁵Mrs. Burton R. Clarke, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Personal Email (2008).

A Compelling Central Vision That Matters

Each framework talks about the importance of the vision which gives the organization a reason for its existence. While Benne characterizes it as an “unsurpassable” Christian vision which “addresses all the essential questions of life: meaning, purpose, and conduct,”⁴⁶ the others are equally emphatic about its importance but from a more secular point of view. Hargreaves insists that it must be a vision that “matters” and that “engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally.” He talks about the importance of it addressing “issues of social justice.”⁴⁷ Whetten identifies that this *raison d’être* should be of “central importance” while Clarke speaks about the “core set of beliefs” at the heart of the organizational saga that are brought to life by a single man or cadre of believers. Clearly cathedrals born in the mind’s eye must be compelling enough to call men to altruistic action to build a future they may not live long enough to see actualized.

A Vision That is Distinctive and Demands Action

A second crossroads in the theoretical literature focuses on how this compelling vision permeates all aspects of the organization in what Whetten calls a “distinctive” way. Benne speaks about the importance of *ethos* or an institution’s behaviors and practices that align to the vision. He references “a call to moral action, a practicing of virtues such as humility or hospitality, obedience to God to exercise ...gifts in service to

⁴⁶Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 201.

⁴⁷Hargreaves and Fink, "The Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership," 3-10.

others through specific roles.”⁴⁸ In laymen’s terms, it is a walking of the talk, a realization that what one *does* is more important than what one says. Nouns must become verbs. So for Hargreaves, it is about sustainable ideas that lead to activist engagement, that seeks to influence the environment and integral systems that can promote change in the world outside the institution.⁴⁹ Burton Clarke references that these distinctive actions, behaviors, practices and programs, often symbolize the essence of the vision of the institution and may give rise to imagery and symbolism that communicates its importance in the telling of the saga within the organization and to others who are learning about what is held important by this group of proud people.⁵⁰

A Vision That Endures Over Time Because Key Personnel are Empowered Through Distributive Leadership

Ideas can only become realities when individuals agree to organize and do their part to build the cathedral. Benne speaks of “Christian persons who bear that vision and ethos. Without committed persons, a religious tradition is merely an historical artifact.”⁵¹ Hargreaves delineates the ingredients necessary for what Whetten defines as an “enduring vision.” Hargreaves declares that the responsibility for carrying out the vision must be shared. He speaks of distributive leadership that fosters the development of

⁴⁸Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 6.

⁴⁹Andy Hargreaves and I. Goodson, *Change Over Time? A Report of Educational Change Over 30 Years in Eight U.S. and Canadian Schools*. Final Report to the Spencer Foundation (Chicago, IL: Spencer Foundation, 2004).

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 7.

human and material resources and thus over time cyclically attracts the best leaders and teachers, generation after generation, to join the cause. He points to “chains of influence” that are deliberately built by a leader intent on the vision surviving even after charismatic initial leaders are gone. This is true succession planning. Clarke talks about the key group of believers who carry on the vision and protect it from detrimental influences from the inside or from the outside. These believers are comprised of alumni and students who are bound together through shared past experiences memorialized in the saga, faculty who are integral in the development of the vision and ensure its continuance by self-selecting and recruiting those who follow in their footsteps. Perhaps of greatest importance at the birth of the vision and at later critical moments is a leader who keeps focus on what is important and is not afraid to take action at critical moments.

All of these elements—people who take action fueled by compelling ideas—are found in literature that passes the test of time. In English classrooms they may go by other names—characters, plot, theme, or symbol. With that understanding, Clarke’s work to uncover the unifying saga—or story—that knits together an organization around a compelling, enduring vision becomes even more significant when trying to understand how an organization’s identity and vision can be sustained over time. The literary element that needs to be added to the list before a full understanding can occur is that of *setting*. Setting in a literary story is about time and place. Setting provides a context or a backdrop—sometimes historical—for understanding why people think and act the way that they do. And in the case of this historical research study, analyzing the setting

provides a framework—or sets the stage—for coming to a deeper understanding of this antebellum academy, first known as the Illinois Institute and later, Wheaton Academy.

Robert Benne in <i>Quality with Soul</i>	Hargreaves/Fink in <i>Sustainable Leadership</i>	Whetten/Albert in <i>Organizational Identity</i>	Clarke's Organizational Saga
Vision Unsurpassable Christian vision which addresses essential questions of meaning, purpose, and conduct	Vision that matters Engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally Addresses issues of social justice	Vision of central importance	Core set of beliefs Brought to life by leader
Ethos Behaviors and practices that align to vision Call to moral action Service to others	Spreads through action Activist engagement Influences environment and systems	Distinctive	Distinctive programs of which people are proud Gives rise to imagery that symbolizes essence of organization
People Committee Christians who bear vision and ethos	Lasts because leader shares responsibility with all people Distributes leadership Develops human and material resources Attracts best leaders and teachers Chains of influence ensure success over time—succession planning	Enduring	Key group of believers carry on vision through telling of saga Strong alumni and student base bound together by saga Faculty self-selects replacements All protect against outside /inside influences that would destroy vision Key charismatic leader

Figure 1. Crosswalk of Four Frameworks: Benne, Hargreaves/Fink, Whetten/Albert, and Clarke

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To fully appreciate the sustaining saga of Wheaton Academy, it is necessary to first review what is known about these early schools known as academies and the historical milieu—or setting—during which they developed.

What is an Academy?

Today the term *academy* is thought by many to be a term ascribed to a private high school with limited attendance, perhaps organized through means of a charter. Some believe academies, which may levy high tuitions, provide education only for the upper echelons of society or are organized to provide a focused education in the arts, for example. A popular online free dictionary states that an academy is: 1) a school for special instruction; or 2) a secondary or college-preparatory school, especially a private one.¹ The truth of the matter is that the academy in America is not a new institution, for scholars in this field have identified that:

the earliest academies originated in 18th century colonial America, spread across the United States by the mid 1800's and began to decline with the rise of the public high school movement after the Civil War and into the 20th century. While in the beginning these academies were often founded by denominations and sects interested in educating students for the ministry and other supportive roles to promote their denominational beliefs, most academies later found support from their local communities, patrons, and merchants who recognized the advantages this form of higher

¹The American Heritage Dictionary, ed., *Academy*, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/academy> (accessed November 5, 2008). The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

education brought to their communities. Local funding brought local control and accountability and a stable source of education of their youth.²

Theodore Sizer, in his introduction to *The Age of the Academies*, points to the significance of the rise of these early educational institutions:

Few social institutions in American history better exemplify the grand optimism of the people of this republic than do the academies. These schools...were the outgrowth of enthusiasm for formal education on the part of local leaders, philanthropists, state legislatures, and the people at large. While many have long since vanished, in their day these academies, founded locally or regionally, flourished and in a small way provided the country as a whole with what is now called secondary education. The age of the academies, that is the period of their greatest development, extended roughly from the Revolution to the Civil War and was an era well known for its grant, unrealistic optimism in the power of institutions to perfect man.³

Kim Tolley in “Mapping the Landscape of Higher Schooling, 1727-1850,” a chapter from *Chartered Schools: Two Hundred Years of Independent Academies in the United States, 1727-1925*, provides this definition of the academy:

In contrast to a town, church, or venture school, an academy is defined here as an institution providing a relatively advanced form of schooling that was legally incorporated to ensure financial support beyond that available through tuition alone. Academies were founded by religious groups, local communities, counties, fraternal and educational societies, colleges and universities, and by private individuals. Academies can be distinguished from other institutions on the basis of their administrative structure, their relatively private form of control, and their curriculum. An academy’s articles of incorporation usually stipulated the formation of a Board of self-perpetuating or otherwise relatively independent trustees responsible for control of policy and oversight...a school’s articles of incorporation, administrative structure and financial resources, rather than

²Nancy Beadie and Kimberley Tolley, *Chartered Schools: Two Hundred Years of Independent Academies in the United States, 1727-1925* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002), 1-7.

³Theodore R. Sizer, *The Age of the Academies: Classics in Education*, edited by Theodore R. Sizer, Vol. 22 (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964), 1.

its title, determine whether it falls into the category of an academy. Many schools designated as institutes belong in this category.⁴

Tolley explains that the differences between venture schools and academies could be seen in the benefits to the community as well as to those who founded the school. Revenue beyond tuition made growth possible through construction of buildings and facilities which for the community fulfilled their need to have a guarantee about ongoing educational opportunities.⁵ Financial stability made it possible for more of these incorporated academies to survive. “Additionally, the creation of a Board of Trustees ensured a larger degree of accountability to the community, because the Board not only provided input in the selection of the school’s curriculum and the hiring of teachers, but often assisted in overseeing public examinations of the students at regular intervals.”⁶

The Age of the Academies

Although today one can only find a limited number of academies from this earlier era, Henry Barnard, named in 1867 the first United States Commissioner of Education who also served as editor from 1855 to 1881 of the *American Journal of Education* stated in an 1855 edition of that journal that “during their heyday in 1850” there were 6100 incorporated academies with enrollment nine times greater than those of the colleges.”⁷ During the time period from 1818 to 1848, Illinois chartered at least 125 academies and

⁴Beadie and Tolley, *Chartered Schools*, 21-22.

⁵Ibid., 26-27.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 19.

Ohio roughly 100.⁸ Wheaton Academy, founded in 1853 as the Illinois Institute, is of this era.

Sizer remarks on not only the large number of these academies but focuses his analysis on the phenomenal national spread of these institutions. He questions “why this grassroots, unorganized, but national growth of academies took place.”⁹ He cites several reasons:

- 1) a belief that these schools would teach republican duties and principles, assuring an informed electorate and the permanence of the American form of democratic government;¹⁰
- 2) a belief that academies “provided the right balance of both useful studies and traditional book learning...a compromise between practical education and the education traditionally held valuable.”¹¹
- 3) the development of normal schools, a type of academy or sometimes a department within an academy, was purposed to train teachers which in later years found financial support from the state and often developed independently.
- 4) many ante-bellum colleges were in need of secondary schools to supply them with a number of sufficiently prepared students so they opened their own academies as preparatory departments attached to the college; in some cases higher enrollments were seen in the preparatory academy than in the college itself, and ¹²
- 5) the religious zeal of denominations and the pride of states and localities fueled this expansion into territories in the Midwestern United States to “add luster to their new and struggling communities

⁸Ibid., 23.

⁹Sizer, *Age of the Academies*, 13.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 16-17, 19.

¹²Ibid., 33.

and to attract additional and hopefully desirable settlers and investors.”¹³

Certainly this “nineteenth century religious zeal” was a key contributor in the bringing on of the age of the academies. “During the period historians call the Second Great Awakening, from 1795 to 1837, such religious denominations as the Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and others increased their efforts to evangelize through education” in a fashion that often became more competitive than cooperative as they sought to increase their future denominational numbers.¹⁴ “One of the purposes to which these new evangelical denominations dedicated this power was the establishment of educational institutions. The Methodists in particular pursued a policy of establishing an affiliated academy in each of its conference territories, while the Baptists concentrated more heavily on the organization of colleges.”¹⁵ While this may be true of the Baptists, during the 1850s, the short-lived Warrenville Academy in Warrenville, Illinois served the Baptist congregations in Warrenville, Naperville, and surrounding communities.¹⁶ These types of efforts enabled Protestant denominations to acquire the kind of power that Catholics long enjoyed.¹⁷ In 1840, for example, the increasing numbers of Catholics emigrating from Europe to the United States catalyzed

¹³Ibid., 17.

¹⁴Beadie and Tolley, *Chartered Schools*, 29.

¹⁵Ibid., 94.

¹⁶Warrenville Academy, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1317.html> (accessed November 5, 2008).

¹⁷Beadie and Tolley, *Chartered Schools*, 94.

the fourfold increase of Catholic Academies from 1840-1860 which helped them number over 660 by the turn of the century.¹⁸

It is also important to underscore that a significant number of all of these academies—religious and non religious—enjoyed symbiotic relationships with colleges and universities who subsumed them as “preparatory departments” within their institutions¹⁹ in much the same way that the subject of this study—Wheaton Academy—originally named the Illinois Institute, was brought under the wing as a preparatory department of Wheaton College when it was rechartered and renamed in 1860 by its first President Jonathan Blanchard, former president of Knox College. This symbiotic relationship is important to remember in light of issues relative to sustainability of vision and organizational identity.

The Second Great Awakening and Origins of the Vision of Social Justice

Charles Finney was one of America’s well known 19th century evangelists who later became president of Oberlin College, the first college in America to award bachelor’s degrees to women and African Americans and which served as a stop on the Underground Railroad during the Civil War era. He was one of the leaders of what became known as the Second Great Awakening, a series of revivals that spread like wildfire across the nation. Though Finney believed that one’s salvation or conversion experience came through grace alone and not works, he still believed that the way people act and behave in the world—their ethos—was a sign of their faith. His sermons were

¹⁸Ibid., 9.

¹⁹Ibid., 30.

filled with anti-slavery messages and later he was joined by others who linked revivals with social reform including Jonathan Blanchard, founder of Wheaton College and Henry Ward Beecher who also addressed issues of the day such as temperance, the role of women, and peacemaking. Today's emphasis on human rights and social justice are derivatives from this earlier historical movement. In its broadest sense then, a vision of social justice has, at its core, the twin concepts of human rights and equality, and focuses on how the everyday lives of people from all social classes can sustain this vision. Such was the vision fueling the cathedral building of Wheaton College and Wheaton Academy at their founding.

A Few Academies From History

The Phillips Academies, 1781 to Present

The Phillips Academies, Exeter Academy and Andover Academy to be exact, are two institutions existing today that were founded in the late 18th century. In 1781 John and Elizabeth Phillips provided the historically treasured “Deed of Gift” outlining the principles and financial backing for the institution. This document written more than 200 years ago is now housed in the Exeter Academy’s archives and is referenced at the opening assembly of every school year by the current principal. It includes in this vision the hope that the academy, besides providing instruction in typical academic areas, will “learn them [the students] the real end and great business of living.”²⁰ Its most famous phrase, “goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without

²⁰*Phillips Exeter Academy: Academy Archives*, http://www.exeter.edu/libraries/4513_4623.aspx (accessed 2008).

goodness is dangerous,” is quoted frequently.²¹ Sizer underscores that this optimistic ideal of educating students in the:

business of life, science, literature was repeated over and over again in foundations in every part of the country [during this age of the academies]. These statements reveal not only a great faith in the power of formal schooling to prepare boys and girls for “life” but also an assumption that “life” was in many respects a here-and-now matter, for which one prepared by studies of a here-and-now nature, by subjects “useful” as well as “ornamental”...as Benjamin Franklin put it. The [curricular] program of the academy represented a break from the medieval [narrow, classical] curriculum of the Latin school and included beyond Latin, Greek, and arithmetic, the study of English, modern languages, algebra, history, and the practical arts of navigation, agriculture, surveying, and pedagogy.²²

John Phillips, who supported this vision for academies, descended from Reverend George Phillips, a Puritan who had fled England to seek religious freedom in Massachusetts. He himself was a religious man steeped in a Calvinist belief system that he inherited from generations of devout ancestors, for he was the son, grandson, great grandson, and great great grandson of ministers who served their God as ministers.²³ Yet despite this grounding, the website of Exeter currently states that:

Since its founding, the Academy [Exeter] has moved progressively away from requiring Christian religious observance among its students, and from the teaching of Christian Theology. Christian religious observances in the Chapel designed by Ralph Adams Cram were ended by Tenth Principal Richard W. Day [in the late 1960’s]. Day who also led the renovation of the room to strip out any religious connotation and ended the requirement that all students take one year of classes in Christian Theology. A remnant of this religious foundation is still to be found in the school seal which includes the Greek letters for “CHARITI THEOU”

²¹Ibid.

²²Sizer, *Age of the Academies*, 5-6.

²³*Phillips Exeter Academy: Academy Archives*.

which means "by the grace of God." The school website states that: "it is believed the phrase indicates John Phillips' desire that religion be a deep concern of the school."²⁴

Though Exeter today is renowned for academic excellence, it no longer is seen as a school which holds to its religious foundations. The Phillips Academy in Andover, actually was founded by the same family in 1778 shortly before Exeter but followed a similar path toward secularization.

Oberlin Academy, 1833-1916

Predating the public school—Oberlin High School—which opened its doors in 1860, Oberlin Academy was founded in 1833 and until 1892 was known as "College Institute," functioning as a preparatory department of Oberlin College. Its chief purpose was to prepare high school students—both boys and girls—for the college, or to enter technical training or to find jobs and begin working. "An article in the December 12, 1879, issue of *The Oberlin Weekly News* stated that Oberlin Academy had been cited as the largest preparatory school in the United States."²⁵

Oberlin Academy was located in college buildings until its relocation to a nearby mansion. In 1891 the college began hiring instructors outside of the college. After 1905 the academy's enrollment began a steady decline, in part due to the number of public high schools becoming available to students. In November of 1915, the trustees of Oberlin College voted to shut the doors of the academy.²⁶

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Oberlin High School, http://www.oberlin-high.org/ohs_history.html (accessed 2008).

²⁶Ibid.

The school, as is true for many back then including Wheaton Academy, had come into existence because of the dreams of Christians who envisioned a school ‘to train teachers and other Christian leaders for the boundless, most-desolate fields in the West.’²⁷ At that time, Ohio was on the Western frontier of the nation.²⁸ Reverend John J. Shipherd and Philo P. Steward were inspired by John Frederick Oberlin whose education of the peasants in a region of Europe was highly regarded. They decided to name the school after him and thus Oberlin was born. During its heyday, Oberlin embraced a Christian vision of social justice fueled by Charles G. Finney, noted revivalist, who was hired as a professor of theology in 1835. Finney used Oberlin as a launching pad for many revivals and trained students, who would later embark as missionaries on numerous journeys to save souls, address social evils such as slavery, and support coeducation and social advancement for women. On September 6, 1837 the Oberlin Collegiate Institute “granted equal status to men and women, the first American college to do so. This milestone for women was a direct result of Christian ideals [for as] Paul informed his readers ‘in Christ there is neither male nor female.’²⁹

But at the turn of the century, Oberlin and its academy were clearly different institutions than at their founding. Like other colleges and universities that drifted from their religious roots, Oberlin began to modernize the curriculum, hire faculty trained in German research institutions, and alter the role religion played in the life of the college

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Chicago Gospel Com.Net, <http://chi.gospelcom.net/DAILYF/2002/09/daily-09-06-2002.html> (accessed 2008).

²⁹Ibid.

and curriculum. Certainly the teaching of science raised issues that seemed in direct conflict with its religious foundations as an evangelical college. At the very time that Wheaton College was solidifying its vision under 65 years of two presidents with the last name of Blanchard, Oberlin was altering its course to a more secular path, one which shunned the building of any “cathedral within.”³⁰

Elgin Academy, 1839 to Present Day

Not too far away from the present day Wheaton Academy is Elgin Academy located in Elgin, Illinois. Though chartered in the nineteenth century at a time when many academies, including those previously examined, had religious foundations, this academy makes no such claim. Its website claims that it was:

chartered in 1839...four years after the founding of the city of Elgin ... Elgin Academy is proud of its history as the oldest coeducational, non-sectarian college preparatory school west of the Allegheny Mountains. It has been from its founding an independent school dedicated to a classical curriculum, the development of high moral character and a true spirit of community. [Today] Elgin Academy is a day school that serves Preschool through Grade 12 students from Elgin, Barrington, St. Charles, Dundee, Algonquin and more than 30 other communities in the Fox Valley area. From the beginning, [Elgin] Academy has been both non-denominational and coeducational, offering a program dedicated to academic excellence and high moral character.³¹

Though chartered in 1839, it should be noted that it did not actually open its first campus building until 1856, three years after Wheaton Academy, which was then called the Illinois Institute. Elgin also was briefly associated with the University of Chicago, until “in 1903, [Elgin] Academy affiliated with Northwestern University and was for a

³⁰Ibid.

³¹History of Elgin Academy, http://www.elginacademy.org/new_site/menu/about_mission.htm (accessed 2008).

number of years know as Elgin Academy of Northwestern University.”³² That affiliation no longer exists today.

Beyond these few examples it should be noted that some academies were founded through legislative action; others had a military focus in line with state and national goals. Some were founded by private individuals, intent on providing opportunities for disadvantaged populations such as women and blacks. Others were organized by local and county communities and fraternal and educational societies. Available research on these early academies reveals a conflict of opinion on whether they should be remembered as a sign of the nation’s early commitment to learning or instead as irrelevant institutions which faded as public high schools developed and took root in the 20th century. They are largely ignored in the vast majority of history books. One of the most comprehensive sources states that “the academy was the dominant institution of higher schooling from the late 18th century to the late 19th century,”³³ but the source remarks that besides their compiled published research, the only book focused on academy history is this aforementioned earlier landmark study by TheodoreSizer written in 1964, entitled *The Age of the Academies*. The reasons for this reduced place in educational history are unknown but may become clearer when one looks at the factors that led to their decline.

³²Ibid.

³³Beadie and Tolley, *Chartered Schools*, 3.

The Decline of the Academies

Ironically, the age of the academies began its decline within the first dozen years of the young life for Wheaton Academy, the subject of this study. The first academy dated back to 1727 with the founding of an academy for women in New Orleans³⁴ and most historians point to the decline beginning noticeably in the years following the civil war. There are numerous theories as to what led to this decline, but it is undeniable that in these postbellum years “different forms of higher schooling came into intense competition with each other, including non-denominational and denominational academies, coed and single-sex high schools and college, state and independent normal schools, and proprietary institutions devoted to everything from commerce to art.”³⁵

Although some academies had ties to denominations and most felt it important to include moral instruction, a majority of these early institutions were non sectarian and were tied more closely to their communities than to churches as their name reflects. But even though they enjoyed this local support and perhaps a onetime grant of start-up funding, their futures often were hindered because of lack of funding. Sizer points out that “the American was for many things, but he was not for being heavily taxed...[thus] assistance to the academies most often took the form of public encouragement and sporadic aid rather than continuing full financial support....It has been said that schools are the result of men and money. The academies owed their rapid growth to many of the

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 13.

former and their instability and often marginal quality to a lack of the latter.”³⁶ A few academies, such as the Phillips Academies, were fortunate to be supported through large endowments enabling them to weather the financial storms that capsized many academies, particularly as state legislatures weighed in positively on the tax supported financing for public schools to the exclusion of academies. Many academies were forced to fold or to transform into the local public high school. New York, for example, “which had the largest and most elaborate system of state-supported academies in the country, saw at least 64 academies become public high schools in the 20-year period from 1853 to 1874.”³⁷ The popular Ithaca Academy in New York was one such academy that was forced to transform into Ithaca High School. Those academies which were left during these years would have to compete for students whose parents in prior years only paid for their tuition to the academy but now found they were paying taxes to support the local school system. Many opted to forgo an academy education. In this competitive environment some academies were subsumed as preparatory departments for nearby colleges. Others specialized as schools offering music or art. Others honed their identities and became elite private boarding schools or denominational institutions. Though an exact number is unknown, it is likely that only a small percentage of the over 6,000 academies accounted for in the 1860 census still remain with identity intact and sights set on completion of a cathedral imagined generations before.

³⁶Ibid., 21-22.

³⁷Ibid., 251.

The Legacy of the Academies

Despite the fact that few academies remain, and certainly even those which have survived are overlooked by those students of educational history, the academies have left their mark. Researchers Beadie and Tolley have reminded us that:

the independent academy left many historical legacies. As institutions, academies established an infrastructure of capital assets and political and financial support for higher schooling that continues to live on in public schools as well as in alternatives to the public system. As sites of cultural production and reproduction, academies gave expression to cultures of community boosterism, class identity, and missionary zeal as well as to cultures of ethnic and religious pride and resistance. Finally, as historical precedents, academies provide a body of evidence for considering a number of ongoing policy issues in education, including charter school and school choice policies, as well as broader issues of community-based schooling, teacher autonomy, school funding, local control, and church and state.³⁸

Armed with this knowledge of the historical backdrop, this researcher embarked on a journey of discovery, a journey which shed light on the organizational saga that explained how and why during the past 157 plus years, Wheaton Academy has been able to sustain a vision that is true to its founders' original purposes.

³⁸Ibid., 331.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY
Historical Inquiry

Historical inquiry with its analysis of historical documents is the methodology most appropriate to gather and make sense of the necessary qualitative data to understand the saga of Wheaton Academy. According to Jeffrey Glanz, “historical inquiry is the attempt to understand past events by a systematic examination of primary and secondary sources to be able to draw implications for the present and future.”¹ What evidence do we have of the original vision if not through the words—written and spoken—of those who founded the Academy and College—and of those who led it through moments of crisis and celebration? Ethos—one’s practices, behaviors, and way of life—are identifiable in institutional codes of conduct, in photographs, in student artifacts, in journals and diaries. And last, an examination of the people who are the standard bearers of the mission and ethos are subjects for analysis—the school’s succession of headmasters and principals, the faculty, the influential Board members, the families who financially support the work of the school, and the students themselves over time.

¹Jeffrey Glanz, *Fundamentals of Educational Research: A Guide to Completing a Master’s Thesis* (Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 2006), 168.

Case Study

The object of this research study is an organization made up of a group of people who have been unified to a set of purposes and a mission established well over 157 years ago. This intense focus on a single institution lends itself to case study research. As defined in “The Case Study as a Research Method: Uses and Users of Information,” case studies generally involve multiple sources of data, may include multiple cases within a study, and produce large amounts of data for analysis. Researchers from many disciplines use the case study method to build upon theory, to produce new theory, to dispute or challenge theory, to explain a situation, to provide a basis to apply solutions to situations, to explore, or to describe an object or phenomenon. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. Case study results relate directly to the common reader’s everyday experience and facilitate an understanding of complex real-life situations.”²

A distillation of the work of case study researchers such as Robert E. Stake and Robert K. Yin yields a process that begins with definition of research questions and a case upon which to focus:

The research object in a case study is often a program, an entity, a person, or a group of people. Each object is likely to be intricately connected to political, social, historical, and personal issues....the researcher investigates the object of the case study in depth using a variety of data gathering methods to produce evidence that leads to understanding of the case and answers the research questions....Data gathered is normally largely qualitative, but it may also be quantitative. Tools to collect data

²Susan Soy, “The Case Study as a Research Method: Uses and Users of Information,” <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~ssoy/usesusers/1391d1b.htm> (accessed September 30, 2008).

can include surveys, interviews, documentation review, observation, and even the collection of physical artifacts....The case study method, with its use of multiple data collection methods and analysis techniques, provides researchers with opportunities to triangulate the data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusions.³

Yin further clarifies that “evidence for case studies may come from six sources:

documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts.”⁴ Documents include:

letters, memoranda, and other communiqués; agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events; administrative documents—proposals, progress reports, and other internal documents; formal studies or evaluations of the same “site” under study; and news clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media.⁵

Archival records include:

service records, such as those showing the number of clients served over a given period of time; *organizational records*, such as organizational charts and budgets over a period of time; *maps and charts* of the geographical characteristics of a place; *lists* of names and other relevant commodities; *survey data*, such as census records or data previously collected about a ‘site’, and *personal records*, such as diaries, calendars, and telephone listings.⁶

Case study interviews tend to be more open-ended in nature with these participants providing corroborating evidence during the data collection period. To counteract the danger of the participant having too much interpersonal influence, the researcher will rely on “other sources of evidence to corroborate any insight offered by

³Ibid.

⁴R. K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), 84.

⁵Ibid., 85.

⁶Ibid., 87.

such informants and to search for contrary evidence as carefully as possible.”⁷ In addition, this researcher kept a metacognitive journal to record reflections in order to surface any potential undue influence and to maintain a written record of the chain of evidence which increased “the *reliability* of the information in a case study”⁸ thus addressing “the methodological problem of determining construct validity, and thereby increasing the overall quality of the case.”⁹ This journal included field notes, questions that occurred along the way, insights, discoveries, connections and noted contradictions. This journal was periodically shared and discussed to assist in control of bias.

Yin also acknowledges that researchers may wish to make field observations. “Assuming that the phenomena of interest have not been purely historical, some relevant behaviors or environmental conditions will be available for consideration.”¹⁰ Care must be taken, however, if “participant-observation [is used] as a special mode of observation in which the investigator is not merely a passive observer.”¹¹ While it enables a special contextual understanding of the phenomena, seeing something from the inside can create bias within the researcher. Finally, Yin defines physical or cultural artifacts as “a technological device, a tool or instrument, a work of art, or some other physical

⁷Ibid., 89.

⁸Ibid., 102.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 91.

¹¹Ibid., 92.

evidence.”¹² The use of all of these types of evidence, according to Yin enables the researcher to develop “converging lines of inquiry [ensuring] a process of triangulation.”¹³ This type of corroboration enhances a researcher’s ability to draw conclusions with more certitude than would otherwise be possible.

Organizational Life Stages as Organizing Metaphor

The metaphorical perspective reflected in “Eight Stages in the Life of an Association,” a handout obtained from Dr. Janis Fine (see Appendix G) which was adapted from J. J. Cribben’s work in *Leadership* and Kimberly and Miles, *The Organizational Life Cycle*,¹⁴ reveals that an organization can be viewed as though it were a human, birthed and raised through a period of childhood, testing and tested through an adolescent phase of growing independence, to emerge as an adult, fully independent to face the hills and valleys of life experience. While also echoing the work of Albert and Stuart on the formation of organizational identity, this metaphor is helpful in organizing the study of the Wheaton Academy. Clearly, the Academy had a passionate set of founding fathers who encouraged a symbiotic relationship between the College and the Academy under the leadership of the Blanchards to shape its identity in this “conceptual period” from 1853-1949 or during what Clarke would call the initiation of the saga. As the Academy developed, there were those who realized, while it was important to still provide guidance and support for this organization, it was important to nurture its

¹²Ibid., 94.

¹³Ibid., 97.

¹⁴Dr. Janis Fine, “Eight Stages in the Life of an Association,” Loyola University class handout adapted from J. J. Cribben, *Leadership* and Kimberly and Miles, *The Organizational Life Cycle* (Chicago: Janis Fine, 2007).

separate identity which occurred on campus by moving it physically to its own location in Schell Hall and later by relocating it in 1945 to West Chicago in the Children's Home. This would be during what has been termed as "puberty" of the organization. Finally, the inevitable cutting of the apron strings occurred in 1970 during its "young adulthood" as the parent organization Wheaton College severed its legal and financial connections with the Academy, agreeing that it could either close its doors forever or be rescued by a group of parents as it sought to stand as an independent institution. A group of key stakeholders at this critical moment chose to pursue the latter option and, though rife with problems, set it upon a course of maturity leading it from adolescence to its young adult period to adulthood.

Through each of these three phases which the researcher used to organize a discussion of findings—childhood (1853-1945), adolescence (1949-1988), and the maturity of adulthood (1989-present day)—key decisions were made by educational leaders that have enabled the Academy to sustain its vision of building the cathedral. These decisions were inextricably linked to vision, people, and the ethos of the institution and are discoverable in the historical documents and artifacts of its storied past—its organizational saga—and through interviews that were conducted with individuals important to the schools' history and organizational identity.

Research Questions

The general research questions were as follows:

1. What was the original vision for the Academy?
2. To what extent has it been maintained or altered throughout its 157-year history?
3. What key educational leadership decisions were made that ensured the sustainability of the original vision?
4. How does Robert Benne's framework, focused on Vision, Ethos, and People, detailed in *Quality with Soul* relate to the success of sustainability of purpose at Wheaton Academy?
5. What is the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy? When was it initiated and by whom? What key components from Burton Clarke's work supporting fulfillment of that saga are to be found in the evidence for this distinctive institution?
6. What is the significance of this study to today's educational leader?

To find answers to these important questions, the researcher used primary and secondary sources, as well as conducted interviews of important contemporary participants who either had knowledge of or experience with the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy.

Primary Sources and Secondary Sources

Arthur Marwick, noted publisher of 20th century British social history, first defined primary sources as “the basic, raw, imperfect evidence which is often fragmentary, scattered, and difficult to use. Secondary sources are books and articles of other historians... The primary sources are the raw material, more meaningful to the expert historian than to the layman; the secondary sources are the coherent work of history, article, dissertation or book.”¹⁵ Later he provided useful clarification when he wrote that “primary sources were created within the period studied, secondary sources are produced later, by historians studying that earlier period and making use of the primary sources created within it.”¹⁶ Within these categories McCulloch explains that there is a hierarchy worth noting: “Manuscript materials held in archives and private collections occupy the first level of the hierarchy of primary documentary sources, followed at the next level by published pamphlets, periodicals, and governmental reports... In this sense, unpublished and relatively inaccessible documents appear to carry greater intrinsic worth... than published documents.”¹⁷ Whether primary or secondary, McCulloch stresses the importance of an analysis of the document in light of its

milieu, or in other words to relate the text to its context. It is necessary to find out as much as possible about the document from internal evidence elicited from the text itself, but is no less important to discover how and why it was produced and how it was received. Documents are social and historical constructs, and to examine them without considering this simply

¹⁵Gary McCulloch, *Documentary Research: In Education, History, and the Social Science* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 30.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

misses the point. For the same reasons, documents need also to be understood with reference to their authors and to what they were seeking to achieve in so far as this can be known.¹⁸

There were several other issues to keep in mind when dealing with primary sources. The first step was to establish the authenticity of the document followed by a determination of its reliability, bias, and representative nature.¹⁹ A further difficulty often lies in the interpretation of the meaning of the document in such a way to understand how the contemporaries of the document would view it as compared to those today who would make judgments about it.²⁰

Primary Sources

Keeping these parameters in mind, the researcher first used primary source material located at: Wheaton Academy in West Chicago, Illinois; the Special Collections and Archives at Wheaton College; DuPage Historical Society; and Wheaton Public Library. A preliminary review of these materials revealed that the following primary sources were available: 1) Wheaton Academy Bulletins from at least 1915 to 1950 housed in the Wheaton College archives; 2) Wheaton College *Record*, the official newspaper/periodical of the College since 1878 which began as a faculty written publication. Over time it was taken over by students. Up until 1945 when the Academy physically moved to West Chicago, the *Record* included news of the Academy and its students. These issues were found in the College Archives and in the bound periodical

¹⁸Ibid., 6.

¹⁹Ibid., 43-44.

²⁰Ibid., 45.

stacks of the college library; 3) Wheaton College *Echoes* and *Tower*. The *Echo* was the first yearbook and began around 1900 and was followed by the *Tower*, which began in the early 1920s and the *Compass*, which began after 1945. These were the yearbooks for the college students, the Academy students and even the junior high school age students who were part of the Preparatory Academy. They are located in the archives, in the library, and in Wheaton Academy offices; 4) Board and Trustee minutes, some of which were available in the college archives, though some were restricted. Some were also available in the Wheaton Academy files and archives; 5) Collected and organized papers of individuals who were key figures in the institution's history—such as Jonathan Blanchard and his son and successor Charles Blanchard—which are housed in college archives. Others of importance whose papers were available were key Academy Deans/Headmasters such as Darien Straw and Edward Schell; 6) Wheaton Academy programs, news clippings, photographs, correspondences, and brochures; 7) and Existing Oral History interviews, specifically two from women who attended the Academy in the 1920's: Elizabeth Howard Warner '29 and Ruth Hess '27. Also of interest are numerous video recordings of alumni recently created through the Academy's Heritage Project.

Secondary Sources

The researcher also used secondary sources, many of which are histories and biographies about Wheaton College that include important information about the Academy and its symbiotic relationship particularly until 1945. Most notable are the following works: 1) Bechtel, Paul M. *Wheaton College: A Heritage Remembered, 1860-1984*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1984; 2) Kilby, Clyde S. *Minority of One*.

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959; and 3) Willard, W. Wyeth. *Fire on the Prairie: The Story of Wheaton College*. Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1950.

Interviews

The researcher was most interested in interviewing individuals who had information about or had participated in the decision-making process at critical junctures in the life of Wheaton Academy. Past and present Board members, headmasters, faculty, alumni, and parents that were identifiable because of their roles in preserving the vision of the school were at the top of the list to contact and interview. Included in that list were: Dr. David Roth, recently retired headmaster who presided over the Academy for eighteen years and has moved on to found another Christian high school on Chicago's north shore; and Dr. Gene Frost, the present head of school who was himself once a student at the Academy and a teacher, Board member and recently led a \$14 million dollar fundraising effort to ensure the future of the high school. A list of questions was used to gather important insights about the vision, ethos, and people of the Academy. In addition, the researcher found names of those to be interviewed in historical documents as well as gathered referrals from those interviewed as to whom should be contacted for this work, much like the snowball sampling method of survey research described below.

It should be noted that Wheaton Academy embarked on a \$14 million dollar fundraising program to support its future vision, including the construction of a brand new field house which was named the Heritage Field House. When the facility opened, the long history of the Academy was commemorated with several activities. One of these

activities was the implementation of an oral history project that began with the collection of stories of important members through an onsite interview/recording protocol. The recorded histories have been collected by the school and serve as additional historical artifacts for analysis.

Before individuals were contacted at the Academy, the researcher contacted Dr. Gene Frost, Head of School, seeking his permission. Dr. Frost was presented with a *Letter Requesting Institutional Cooperation* (see Appendix A), a *Letter of Institutional Cooperation* (see Appendix B), and a *Synopsis of Research* (see Appendix C). His signatures were secured to initiate the process. This permission allowed the researcher to collect data by interviewing five key individuals with special knowledge of the Academy which helped to corroborate the research, as well as permission to review available documents and archived materials. This agreement was approved of as part of the process of approval gained through application to Loyola's Institutional Review Board.

Participant Selection

Theory-based Sampling

Participants were identified using two methods. The first method labeled “theory-based sampling” is a procedure in which “the theory determines who is included (e.g., a study of innovation and adoption: early adopters, influentials, followers, and late deciders).”²¹ Using this first method, the researcher sought to identify those individuals who were directly connected to the Academy, especially as they were involved in its

²¹David R Krathwohl and Nick L. Smith, *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal: Suggestions for Students in Education and the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 128.

development and survival as an organization, or involved in the sustainability of its vision. A list of questions was used to gather important insights about the vision, ethos, and people of the Academy (see Appendix E).

Snowball or Chain-referral Sampling

The second method is known as “snowball or chain-referral sampling in which one determines the members of a group by asking each informant to name others in a particular group who in turn are asked that question.”²² In this study, the researcher conducted interviews, asking members identified from “theory-based sampling” to name additional individuals they believed should also be included and interviewed, thus doubling the number of potential interviewees.

Invitation to Participate

Once identified, the researcher contacted each participant by phone, and followed by hard copy invitation in the mail to invite them to be part of this research study (see Appendix D). Each participant was provided with a synopsis (see Appendix C) that included: 1) brief purpose of the research study, 2) a description of the procedures used for the interview process, 3) a clarification of the potential risks and benefits to participation, 4) assurances about confidentiality, if necessary, 5) assertions that their participation was voluntary and could have been halted at any point during the interview process, and 6) information about contacts that were sources of further information about this process. This document also had a place for participants to provide a signature and date indicating consent which was countersigned and dated by the researcher.

²²Ibid.

Interview Procedures

Interviews for those participants who consented were set up in locations and times that were convenient for them. All interviews—lasting approximately one to three hours—were digitally recorded by the researcher for eventual transcription and analysis. Interview questions (see Appendix E) were organized using the categories of Robert Benne’s framework: vision, people, and ethos. These were tentative questions, but this researcher recognized early on that what the interviewee shared sometimes caused the interviewer to deviate slightly from this list to seek clarification of newly presented information. In this way, the interview had somewhat more of an open-ended interview-conversation. After each interview was completed, digital recordings were given to a transcriber for transcription. Until that delivery occurred, the digitized recordings were kept in a locked file in the researcher’s residence, to which only the researcher had access. The researcher secured the signature and consent of the transcriber on a transcriber confidentiality agreement (see Appendix F).

Data Analysis

Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of a study. Analyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined in the past.²³

This researcher reviewed primary and secondary source artifacts and interview transcriptions to identify recurring themes and patterns that helped to address theoretical

²³Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 105.

propositions identified in the research framework. Triangulation of data points served to corroborate conclusions drawn from this analysis as much as was possible in this type of qualitative research study. Yin notes, though, that case studies are limited in their ability to be generalizable. “Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.”²⁴

Researcher’s Qualifications and Limitations

Another limitation in this case study research project was the unavoidable personal bias of the researcher. It is important for readers of this dissertation to know that the researcher was a 1977 graduate of Wheaton College, and her son was a 2010 graduate of Wheaton Academy. The researcher lived in the Wheaton area or neighboring communities for the past 38 years and about thirteen years ago concluded a five-year stint as an adjunct professor at Wheaton College. While these links to the institutions and communities in question designated the researcher at once as being extremely qualified to understand the culture and subtext of each place of education, they also caused the researcher to declare some limitations in this study. The researcher’s attempt at objectivity was somewhat unavoidably diluted by experiences gained during the past 38 years. To help ameliorate these effects, the researcher was careful to search for multiple occurrences or artifacts to ensure that a triangulation of data occurs. The researcher also maintained a personal log or journal to keep a metacognitive audit as well as physical record of the journey of discovery. This journal also helped surface some of the personal reactions of the researcher as she read, interviewed, and examined. The journal caused

²⁴Ibid., 21.

the researcher to pause and ask questions, choosing to include or exclude data because of an opinion brought to the table. It enabled the researcher to ask if a subjective view of a certain artifact was distorted because of personal life experience. Outside readers of this dissertation were listened to for their perspective on the researcher's drawn conclusions, for in those observations were clues to biases that needed to be checked. Merriam identifies "six basic strategies to enhance internal validity in qualitative research studies"²⁵ [as follows]:

1. Triangulation: using multiple sources of data or methods to confirm emerging findings.
2. Member checks: taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible.
3. Long-term observation: at the research site or repeated observations of the same phenomenon—gathering data over a period of time in order to increase validity of findings.
4. Peer examination: asking colleagues to comment on findings as they emerge.
5. Participatory or collaborative modes of research: involving participants in all phases of research from conceptualizing the study to writing up the findings.
6. Researcher's biases: clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study.²⁶

This researcher triangulated the data gathered through interviews with evidence gleaned from primary and secondary source material. Member checks were conducted by

²⁵S. B. Merriam, ed. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 204-05.

²⁶Ibid.

asking participants to review transcripts for accuracy and to allow for clarifying additions or corrections to be made. Participants were asked to initial and date the final transcript draft that was kept in a locked file by the researcher. Peer examinations were conducted as various drafts of the research study at hand were reviewed by the researchers' dissertation committee. The researcher's biases were identified and care was taken to ameliorate the effects of such.

To balance these limitations, it was also important for readers to know the researcher's academic training and credentials well prepared her for this type of dissertation. Her bachelor's degree in English from Wheaton, coupled with a master's degree from Northwestern University in medieval and renaissance English literature equipped the researcher with ample practice in the art of literary and historical analysis. Her work to complete a Type 75 degree with a focus on curriculum and instruction completed at Concordia University worked hand in hand with completed doctoral coursework at Loyola University to equip the researcher with an understanding of the theory, practice, and administration of educational institutions, especially at the secondary level. And certainly, her 34 years in secondary education and 23 as an administrator prepared her for thinking and writing about this topic. Make no mistake: the issues of sustainability of vision were very important to the researcher as she entered the latter stages of her career.

The researcher also noted that the better part of several years was used to carefully spade the ground to ensure that enough materials were available for this project. The researcher read many of the existing secondary sources (e.g., historical accounts,

biographies) about Wheaton College, identified locations of a majority of existing primary sources and artifacts, and secured and reviewed a handful of dissertations that talk about Wheaton College, Jonathan Blanchard, and other related topics. It should be noted that no dissertations were located that dealt with any aspect of Wheaton Academy and according to a personal email received from Burton Clarke in response to an email inquiry, no one has taken his research on organizational sagas and applied it to primary or secondary educational institutions, so in this way the researcher believes this work will make a contribution to the field.²⁷

²⁷Mrs. Burton R. Clarke, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Personal Email (2008).

CHAPTER IV

INITIATION OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY FROM 1853 TO 1949

The Story Begins

To understand the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy, one must first understand the larger than life Jonathan Blanchard, who together with his son Charles, governed the Academy and the College for nearly sixty-five years. The influence of the Blanchards began during the infancy of these institutions and continued through the formative years, laying a groundwork of social and moral reform that would echo through beliefs and practices for years to come.

Jonathan Blanchard's Ancestral Heritage of Reform and Protest

Jonathan Blanchard's ancestral family tree is peppered with individuals bent on protest and reform. His grandson, Raymond P. Fischer wrote in *Four Hazardous Journeys of the Reverend Jonathan Blanchard*, that "a remote ancestor, a French Huguenot, fled to England to escape persecution by the Catholic Church. His [Jonathan Blanchard's] great-great-grandfather, Samuel Blanchard, came to America fleeing from Archbishop Laud's persecution of dissenters from the Church of England...arriving in Massachusetts in 1625."¹ Other biographers have underscored that the Blanchards, though from Vermont, could trace their heritage five generations back to Pilgrims and Puritans, who had come to America for religious freedom. This single-minded

¹Raymond P. Fischer, *Four Hazardous Journeys of the Reverend Jonathan Blanchard, Founder of Wheaton College* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1953), 14.

individualism in this quest for freedom was also clearly evident in Jonathan Blanchard's six uncles who were described as: "bowing not, not doing reverence to king, pope, or bishop, abhorring slavery and titled aristocrats of all grades."² Even if this reformatory spirit was not genetically transmitted, throughout his life actions, Jonathan Blanchard's and teachings give proof to the fact that he echoed his forefathers' strong resolve and unshakable values.

W. Wyeth Willard, author of *Fire on the Prairie*, additionally identified the importance that living in Vermont played in forming the values of this future Midwestern college president who was born in Rockingham, Vermont in 1811 and lived there until he graduated from Middlebury. Willard stated that "if it is true...that the geography of a land definitely affects the character of its inhabitants, this may explain...the granite-like and firm qualities of Jonathan Blanchard."³

Mountainous Vermont, source of much of the world's granite at the time, was a state that in the late 1700s and early 1800s was just as "rock solid" in its controversial stances against slavery, the Masonic movement, intemperance, Sabbath-breaking, and war, all issues of great concern to Blanchard. According to the 1790 census, there were no slaves in Vermont.⁴ The anti-Masonic movement was fueled by an alleged murder of a man named Morgan who supposedly divulged secrets of the lodge and paid for this indiscretion with his life. This event whipped up an emotional furor, accelerated the

²W. Wyeth Willard, *Fire on the Prairie: The Story of Wheaton College* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1950), 25-26.

³Ibid., 27.

⁴Ibid., 26.

demise of the Vermont lodges, and birthed the political party of the Anti-Masons in 1832, a movement which definitely left a lifelong mark on Jonathan Blanchard and the educational institutions he shaped as he never was able to let go of his anti-lodge zeal.⁵ At this time, Vermont was also a state that declared itself “Christian” from a declaration in the state constitution that stated it was the religion of the state to adopting general assembly resolutions related to observing the Sabbath.⁶ In the late 1770s, even though all men could vote, “no man could take part in making state laws unless he was a member of a Protestant church, and would swear that he believed in God and the Bible.”⁷

Christian Commitment, Faith, and Early Stand Against Moral Evils

Though not devout Christians, Jonathan’s parents were respectful of Biblical teachings and brought him up in the Congregational church. It was not until 1827, when he was sixteen and beginning his second year at Chester Academy, however, that he made his personal commitment to God. While at Chester, he lived with head of school Reverend Uzziah Burnap, who provided him with room and Board in exchange for light chores. Jonathan developed a friendship with the Reverend’s brother Asa, whose spiritual contentment catalyzed a conversation about his own inner struggles that led Jonathan to a decision point where he would cast his “hope in Christ.”⁸ A record in his journal indicates that “But before I found Christ, I had quit balls and dancing; because I

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Clyde S. Kilby, *Minority of One* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 26.

saw they yielded an over-balance of unhappiness; and cards, because they were associated with all moral evils.”⁹ Drinking alcohol was another “evil” he confronted early in his youth. As recounted in one of his biographies,

Jonathan saw men make beasts of themselves with liquor...quickly grew to hate it. Because it was customary to provide alcoholic drinks to men haying in the fields, there was a supply in his father’s cellar. One day the boy was sent to bring drinks to the men. He went reluctantly. When he got into the cellar and smelled the offensive odor, he picked up a hammer, turned furiously on the large jar of rum, and smashed it to bits. As the contents trickled over the ground, he was happy. In the semi darkness of that cellar Jonathan performed his first act as a reformer, a token of what he was to be.¹⁰

These actions against what he determined to be society’s evil ways were just a harbinger of positions he would model in his behavior as he strove for a “perfect society” and that he would later expect of those involved in the Academy and College. Two years after his conversion, in 1829, he joined the Congregational church in Middlebury, a church that unbeknownst to him was the place of worship for his future bride’s father.¹¹

In the years that followed, Jonathan’s years at Middlebury College included visits during winter breaks to neighboring towns where he would lend his talents teaching or preaching. Returning from one such trip near the end of his time at Middlebury, he literally and figuratively faced a crossroad in his life as he confronted choices about his future life’s work. His son Charles, in his own autobiography, retells the story that depicts the eventual commitment Jonathan made shortly before his graduation in 1832:

⁹Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 28.

¹⁰Kilby, *Minority of One*, 20.

¹¹Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 28.

When my father was a student at Middlebury College he was asked to assist in a revival meeting which was going on in a little church which was some miles distant. He went, and as was not uncommon in those days, walked back to the school. He told me that pausing on a spur of the Green Mountains, he looked to the right, up a narrow, rocky, forbidding valley. To the left, there opened a wide and beautiful plain, green with grass and beautiful trees...he was intending the law as a profession...but the sight of tear-stained faces and the sound of voices sobbing out their sins and confessing faith in the Saviour had aroused new feelings in his heart. As he stood on this summit, looking off to the right, up the narrow, rocky valley, and then to the left over the broad beautiful plain, he seemed to see the two possible ways which he might traverse in life. The pathway to the right...was the road to the Christian ministry; the plain to the left was the way of the lawyer and statesman. The one involved comparative poverty; ...the other, property, the applause of multitudes, and positions of power. And he said to me, 'On that mountain I stood and deliberately chose the narrow, harder path.'¹²

His deliberate choice of the “narrow, harder path” that night was simply the first of many such moments in his life when he would again and again make a similar decision in order to remain true to his beliefs and values.

School and Societal Reformer

Jonathan's first teaching experience began at the age of fourteen around the time of his mother's death when he traveled across the state to Shaftsbury to assume teaching duties in 1825. Monies saved from teaching there and later in Rockingham helped to fund his education at Chester Academy.¹³

After Jonathan Blanchard's graduation from Middlebury College in 1832, he served for two years as principal of Plattsburgh Academy in New York, a school in

¹²Charles A. Blanchard, *President Blanchard's Autobiography* (Boone, IA: Western Alliance, 1915), 29.

¹³Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, “Jonathan Blanchard: Biography,” Informational (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, 2010), inside cover.

desperate need of leadership and sound administration. His notebooks and diary, as well as articles from the 1878 *Plattsburgh Republican* depict a man whose deeply held moralistic beliefs “inclined [him] to make radical statements and in particular to make short shrift with Christians who did not measure up to his standard of spiritual conduct.”¹⁴ As he recounted later at his 80th birthday party gathering, an anecdote recorded in his *Sermons and Addresses*,¹⁵ he was at that time “talking with a Unitarian about the shortcomings of men [when] the Unitarian suddenly asked, “Mr. Blanchard, what state would you bring mankind into? What is a perfect state of society?”¹⁶ The pursuit of the answer to this question consumed him for most of his life, formed the subject of many of his sermons and speeches, as he came to realize that “the only perfect society would be one in which men sought God wholeheartedly.”¹⁷ At his birthday party he acknowledged that “I have since thought and written more on that one theme than any other.”¹⁸ He learned while at Plattsburgh to temper his perfectionist streak, but his pursuit of the perfect society did not lessen. He wrote and published articles on the ills of public education area newspapers. He “presented resolutions calling for standard textbooks, blackboards in every schoolhouse, citizens to take active interest in their schools, and

¹⁴Kilby, *Minority of One*, 34.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Jonathan Blanchard, *Sermons and Addresses* (Chicago, IL: National Christian Association, 1892), 9.

reports on classroom study.”¹⁹ During his junior year at Middlebury, he “attended the initial meeting of the American Institute of Instruction in Boston, then the oldest educational association in the United States”²⁰ and due to his outpouring of fresh ideas for school reform, he was “elected as one of the Institute’s twelve counselors.”²¹ Later, while he was in attendance at Andover, he was invited to speak at the Institute, rubbing elbows with other leaders such as Horace Mann, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Lyman who would figure largely in his later life.²² His address on “The Importance and Means of Cultivating the Social Affections Among Pupils”²³ was one facet of his prescription for a “perfect state of society.”²⁴ While serving as principal, he also soon became a member of the Plattsburgh Lyceum, “contributing to discussions and debates. It was here that he first advocated the immediate abolition of slavery,” a necessity for any society seeking perfection.²⁵ Many of these events were widely publicized in the *Plattsburgh Republican* in issues released on August 17, 1833, September 28, 1833, November 30, 1833 and February 5, 1834.

¹⁹Kilby, *Minority of One*, 36.

²⁰Ibid., 40.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 36.

²⁵Ibid., 35.

Abolitionism

Jonathan left Plattsburgh after two years because his ultimate goal was to become an ordained minister, and he realized that he needed the additional training that only Andover Theological Seminary could provide. At the time Andover “was one of the most distinguished seminaries in the country... [drawing] most of its students from such schools as Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Dartmouth, Amherst, Bowdoin, Middlebury, and Williams.”²⁶ His decision to pursue the ministry was born of an internal struggle he had over which path—preacher or teacher—would provide him an avenue for having the greatest influence.²⁷ Once at Andover, though, he was faced with a more pressing deliberation.

Invited by an Andover classmate of Jonathan’s, Theodore Dwight Weld arrived on campus as “an agent of the newly formed American Anti-Slavery Society.”²⁸ The Society’s intent was to recruit a “band of the finest lecturers... who, in turn, would go out and organize local antislavery societies. It preferred young and vigorous seminary men ...who were fully persuaded of the evil of slaveholding.”²⁹ The fiery call to action ignited Jonathan who decided to drop out of seminary in 1836 and take up the mantle as a commissioned abolitionist lecturer for a year, “to declare a holy cause, the total abolition

²⁶Ibid., 37.

²⁷Ibid., 41.

²⁸Ibid., 42.

²⁹Ibid.

of slavery,”³⁰ a decision which put him at odds with the college president, bringing his career at Andover to a close.

When one door closes, another usually opens and for Jonathan Blanchard it was the beginning of his involvement in a lifelong crusade. In 1836-7, he lectured in Pennsylvania for the Society where he and 70 others were commissioned to go forth “to declare a holy cause, the total abolition of slavery.”³¹ Known as the “Seventy Apostles of Freedom” and “burning with enthusiasm for their cause, this group of young zealots roamed through hostile territory, speaking, wherever a crowd could be found, on the injustice of slavery. They were threatened, mobbed, even stoned, and their lives were in peril.”³² During this time when he was attending an anti-slavery convention, Blanchard met his future wife, Mary Avery Bent, a school teacher who would soon teach in Montgomery, Alabama and learn firsthand the evils of slavery that would solidify and align her point of view with Jonathan’s for the life ahead they would lead. Her annual report delivered as secretary of the Ohio Ladies’ Education Society in 1842 revealed her strongly held beliefs about slavery:

The events of the last year have done more to open the eyes of the people to the nature and demands of the slave power, than any other former year of our national existence. The free states begin to awaken to the fact that slavery and freedom cannot long exist together in the same country, any more than the vulture and the dove in the same nest.³³

³⁰Paul M. Bechtel, *Wheaton College: A Heritage Remembered, 1860-1984* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1984), 13.

³¹Ibid.

³²Fischer, *Four Hazardous Journeys*, 15.

³³Frances Carothers Blanchard, *The Life of Charles Albert Blanchard* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932), 14.

Just like Jonathan, Mary had the blood of revolutionaries running through her veins, for she was descended from Mary Adams, sister of Sam Adams, described to be “the very soul of the Revolution and incorruptible integrity.”³⁴

Following his year as a lecturer, Jonathan made a decision to enroll at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati where he remained until his ordination as a Presbyterian minister in 1838. During his time there he “sat at the feet of the famous Lyman Beecher”³⁵ and formed friendships with all of Beecher’s social reform minded children: Henry Ward Beecher and George Beecher (both pastors), Harriet Beecher Stowe (renowned author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) and Edward Beecher (philosopher who he would later appoint to the Board of trustees of Wheaton College). His year of study was punctuated by trips into the heart of Cincinnati to preach and lecture, particularly at two “colored churches.”³⁶ As a result, he was extended an invitation to preach at the Sixth Presbyterian Church, a new congregation which had broken away from the First Presbyterian Church in 1831 because of its pro-slavery stance. “Sixth Church came to be known as an abolitionist or “nigger” church, though it had no Negroes in its congregation. Its first pastor was the Reverend Asa Mahan, later the president of Oberlin College, and a strong abolitionist.”³⁷ Jonathan was fueled in his single-minded focus to stamp out slavery by the news of a mob action murder in Illinois of Elijah P. Lovejoy, an

³⁴Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 30.

³⁵Ibid., 29.

³⁶Kilby, *Minority of One*, 67.

³⁷Ibid.

abolitionist who was establishing printing press operations to get the word out on the evils of slavery.³⁸ Lovejoy became “a martyr to the holy cause” even inspiring Jonathan to write a poem—“The Voice of Blood” which called Illinois “to arouse and fight.”³⁹ Jonathan’s involvement mushroomed as he: talked about abolition openly and persuasively at Lane, published articles in antislavery papers, and sought and received election as one of 400 delegates to the Ohio State Anti-Slavery Society where he was “asked to propose and support a resolution that slaveholding is a sin.”⁴⁰ The resolution, unanimously adopted, was but a preview of his plan which he proposed asking churches “to deny fellowship to all who held slaves or defended the system.”⁴¹ Marriage to Mary soon followed and the pair of crusaders returned to receive his permanent installation as pastor of the Cincinnati church during a time when the city was a political and moral battlefield of opposing viewpoints. He was twenty-seven, while Mary was just nineteen. During his eight year tenure at his church in Cincinnati, Blanchard not only grew his church by 500 members, but he expanded his ministry against the evils of society by initiating *The Herald*, a paper able to publish his lectures on Sabbath reform and various public morals. He also preached in more than twenty churches in Indiana and Ohio.

In 1843, while he was still pastor at the church in Cincinnati, Blanchard was invited to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London and was appointed the

³⁸Ibid., 68.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., 69.

society's American Vice-President.⁴² The limestone castle like vision that would become Wheaton College's Blanchard Hall was most likely born during that visit to Great Britain, inspired in particular by Blanchard's time spent soaking in the beauty of Oxford University and its unique architectural structures. During the summer of 1844, and on his visit to the second World Anti-Slavery Convention, Blanchard met Hiram Kellogg, president of Knox College, from Galesburg, Illinois.⁴³ The meeting was yet another important crossroads in his life, for it would only be two years later in 1846 that he would be accepting the invitation to follow in Kellogg's footsteps to assume the presidency of Knox. Knox College was founded by a Presbyterian clergyman named George Washington Gale. Gale was influential in the conversion of evangelist Charles G. Finney who later became president of Oberlin College and became a close friend of Jonathan Blanchard.⁴⁴ Oberlin was the location for one of Jonathan's signature speeches as he explored his concept of a "perfect state of society." He believed that "every reformer needed a perfect state of society 'ever in his eye, as a pattern to work by....When the gospel has done for all men what it is capable of doing for one, there will arise the 'perfect freedom of universal love' in which every man does as he please but will only please to do good. The freedom of holiness is the very first law of a perfect society...universal industry....Society is perfect where what is right in theory exists in

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Bechtel, *Wheaton College*, 15.

⁴⁴Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 32.

fact; where practice coincides with principle, and the law of God is the law of the land.”⁴⁵

In October of 1845 Blanchard seized an opportunity to represent the abolitionist position in a four-day debate focused on the question of whether “slaveholding in itself was sinful,” a speech later widely published.⁴⁶

Anti-Masonry

In addition to its anti-slavery stance, Knox College held an additional attraction for Blanchard which he admitted to his wife when he explained that he had accepted the call to Knox because “Knox College is founded and Galesburg settled by anti-Masons from the vicinity of Morgan’s murder.”⁴⁷ This alludes, of course, to the murder of the Vermont man named Morgan that fueled Blanchard’s lifelong anti-Masonic sentiments and catalyzed his political action against the lodge for years to come.

College President

Jonathan Blanchard’s ability in 1859 to successfully rescue a floundering Illinois Institute was first proven during the thirteen years of the crucible fires of his first presidency in Galesburg. His willingness to accept the presidency of Knox followed his conviction that he would have yet another opportunity to effect change politically, socially, and religiously, this time in Illinois. He related his conviction “that the foundations should be laid in the principles and elements of Christ’s kingdom” in order that a good influence should be imparted by it to the political and religious life of

⁴⁵Kilby, *Minority of One*, 82-83.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 97-99.

⁴⁷Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 32.

Illinois.”⁴⁸ From the beginning, he was an acknowledged presence in Galesburg, arriving as a man described to be “tall, commanding, strikingly handsome, faultlessly dressed in silk hat and frock coat, a dynamic reformer.”⁴⁹ Gale, [founder of the town bearing his name], initially declared Blanchard to be “a man of God and an uncompromising enemy of slavery...a man who acts on the dictates of conscience whatever difficulties may lie in his path.”⁵⁰ During his inaugural address at Knox in June of 1846, his Christian focus was undeniably front and center, as he spoke without apology of “the Kingdom of Christ: and the Duty of American Colleges Respecting It.”⁵¹

He emphasized to his new flock that “A sound and thorough education is of priceless value. Yet an education without moral and religious education, an enlightened intellect with a corrupt heart, is but a cold gas-light over a sepulcher, revealing, but not warming the dead.”⁵² His fourteen year presidency at Knox was not without its challenges and in fact Gale, who lauded him in the beginning, would actually grow jealous as Blanchard grew in stature and admiration; this jealousy in turn motivated Gale to conspire with admittedly a dwindling number of his allies for Blanchard’s dismissal.

Before that point, however, Jonathan fathered twelve children with Mary, eight of whom survived. Not surprisingly, his firstborn son, though not long lived, was named Jonathan Edwards after the great New England preacher. Had he lived he might have

⁴⁸Kilby, *Minority of One*, 99.

⁴⁹Ernest Elmo Calkins, *They Broke the Prairie* (New York: Scribners, 1937), 39.

⁵⁰Kilby, *Minority of One*, 114.

⁵¹Blanchard, *Sermons and Addresses*, 11.

⁵²Ibid.

grown to understand how his father's own internal moral fire and intensity was reminiscent of the Puritan for whom he was named.

There were probably many reasons why Jonathan left Knox College, but the majority of them revolved around the growing rift between Gale and himself. The rift may have been driven by Gale's jealousy due to the popularity and charisma of the young firebrand Blanchard, or it may have been more about the sectarian divisiveness stemming from their different denominational allegiances that tipped the balance. Though raised, educated, and ordained with the Presbyterian tradition, Blanchard's move to the Congregational church was primarily fueled by the unacceptable positions taken by the Presbyterian National Assembly on the slavery question as they refused to sanction southern member churches for their practices, as well as the fact that Congregationalism provided more local autonomy. While Gale also disagreed with the assembly's actions, he did not go so far as to leave the denomination, instead forming a separate "New School" faction. This type of compromise was an anathema to Jonathan Blanchard who never flinched from what he felt was moral imperatives. This rift was beyond personal as each had Knox College Board members aligned to their positions and while the numbers were equal, they managed to coexist and the college flourished. But in the late 1850s the equation tilted and sectarianism reared its ugly head. The end result was that both men were eventually voted out, Jonathan eventually left, and Knox College set itself on a path to avoid sectarianism in the future which ultimately meant it drifted away from any

religious connections in the years to come.⁵³ The set of experiences certainly schooled Jonathan in steps to take to hold a college and its community focused on his vision, steps which involved careful strategizing about Board composition and a decision to keep the college nondenominational in order to maintain local control and avoid rifts that could develop as denominational positions clashed, particularly in tough economic times. No matter the lessons learned, in some ways these political and philosophical debates foreshadowed times to come at Wheaton. Not one to lack confidence, Blanchard wrote a persuasive summary of his accomplishments as President of Knox, worthy of the most daunting of job interviews:

I had found the College \$5,000 in debt and running behind five dollars a day. I credited the treasury more than \$6,000 given me for my personal support by J. P. Williston. I received from Judge Charles Phelps, a family connection, 18 quarter sections of land, which sold for \$30,000.00; and by rigid economy saved the College lands, procured by Professor Gale the founder of Galesburg, from being sacrificed. I wrote the College diploma, procured the College seal, a library, graduated 13 classes, and left Knox free from debt and worth \$400,000. I came to Wheaton in 1860 still seeking “a perfect state of society” and a college “for Christ and His Kingdom.”⁵⁴

What Blanchard did not mention was the prominence to which he raised Knox, as warrior like he continued to usurp the political and religious stage to debate the evils of slavery, Intemperance, and Masonic lodges. In 1858, Knox’s Old Main Hall, built under Blanchard’s direction and a harbinger of Wheaton’s Blanchard Hall, served as the site of

⁵³“Religious Schism,” <http://www.knox.edu/About-Knox/We-Are-Knox/Our-History/Perspectives-on-Knox:History/Religious-Schism.html> (accessed January 5, 2011).

⁵⁴Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 34.

the Lincoln-Douglas debates, a fitting tribute to the heightened conversation he brought to this once nearly bankrupt institution even if it did occur as he was about to leave.

Jonathan's exit from Knox was delayed a year due in part to a near revolt of students showing support for their popular president. Blanchard was persuaded by the trustees to stay on for one year, a year when he also agreed to pastor a church in Ottawa, Illinois. At that time he was still the largest land-owner in Galesburg with 500 acres of rich black farm land and he needed time to disengage and make a transition to his new role. In his words: ⁵⁵

When I resigned the presidency at Knox College, the Board employed me at an advanced salary, to teach another year, and graduate the next class, which I did. During that year the friends of six colleges asked me to become their president, Iowa College [now Grinnell] unanimously appointed me theirs; and important churches in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Illinois invited me to be their pastor. But against the remonstrance of my beloved friend and counselor, J.P. Williston [inventor of indelible ink], whose funds saved Knox and Wheaton College from dissolution, I came to Wheaton....Why did I come to Wheaton?...I answer: 1. Because Wheaton is near Chicago, the gate city between the Atlantic and the Pacific, between Western Europe and Eastern Asia. 2. Because the Wesleyans had given up their Institute, on condition that their testimony against the lodge should be maintained. 3. But the chief reason was, I believed the Lord had need of Wheaton College, to aid the way for His coming. The state of our nation at this time will explain this.

With the Knox College presidency in the past, Illinois Institute might seem an unlikely destination for Jonathan Blanchard, an individual whose laser like advocacy for abolition, anti-masonry, and temperance, coupled with his experience on the national stage, seemed to destine him for grander opportunities. That assumption, however, overlooks the fact that charismatic Blanchard felt called by his God to Wheaton, to begin

⁵⁵Ibid., 36.

a great work at the exact moment when the future of the institution depended on a unique intervention from just such a leader positioned to write the first chapter of this enduring organizational saga. Burton Clarke's research reveals that, "the saga is initially a strong purpose, conceived and enunciated by a single man or a small cadre whose first task is to find an [organizational] setting that is open, or can be opened to a special effort....This saga initiation can occur with the founding of a brand new organization, or at a time when the existing organization is in a state of crisis or decay and therefore is more open to a change agent, or when all agree that to thrive, evolutionary change is necessary."⁵⁶

Sometimes the agent of change is a small group, though typically Clarke indicates, it is "usually a single individual, usually the president. [This] innovator formulates a new idea, a mission; he has with varying degrees of deliberateness, found his way to a particular college that is in a particular stage of development and that is structurally open, and he starts to design appropriate means of embodying his idea in the organization and to enhance the conduciveness of the setting."⁵⁷ Simply put, Jonathan Blanchard's experiences and vision made him the perfect choice at the greatest moment of need in the young life of The Illinois Institute.

Birth of an Institution, 1853

The Illinois Institute had its beginnings in 1853, a time that actually predates the arrival of Jonathan Blanchard by about six years. Interesting to remember is that only the year before in March of 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe, friend of Jonathan Blanchard, had

⁵⁶Clarke, *The Distinctive College*, 200.

⁵⁷Ibid., 255.

published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To fully understand the vision of the founding families and the attractiveness of this vision to abolitionist Blanchard, one must first recognize the tenor of the times in the years that followed the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act that led these individuals to want to create a very different kind of education for their children. The Compromise of 1850 was passed on January 29, 1850 and was an attempt to keep intact a nation obviously divided over the question of slavery. The nation was tenuously balanced between those states who abhorred slavery and those who did not. The balance came into question as new territories sought to join the union. Should they be admitted as free states or states allowing slavery? After nearly eight months of debate, a compromise was struck due to the efforts of Stephen Douglas from Illinois, an individual who would star in the famous Lincoln-Douglas Debates staged at Knox College in a building that Jonathan Blanchard had built as president. New territories (New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Utah) joining the union would either be allowed admission as "free states" or be permitted to make that decision for themselves later when they applied for statehood. California would be admitted as a free state. At the same time Washington D.C.'s slave trade—but not slavery—would be abolished.⁵⁸

To pacify slave-state politicians, who would have objected to the imbalance created by adding another free state, the Fugitive Slave Act was also passed. Of all the bills that made up the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act was the most controversial. It required citizens to assist in the recovery of fugitive slaves. It denied a fugitive's right to a jury trial. For slaves attempting to build lives in the North, the new law was a disaster. Many left their homes and fled to Canada. During the next ten years, an estimated 20,000 blacks moved to the neighboring country. Free blacks, too, were captured and sent to the South. With no legal right to

⁵⁸“Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act,”
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2951.html> (accessed November, 2010).

plead their cases, they were completely defenseless. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act made abolitionists all the more resolved to put an end to slavery. The Underground Railroad became more active, reaching its peak between 1850 and 1860. The act also brought the subject of slavery before the nation. Many who had previously been ambivalent about slavery now took a definitive stance against the institution. The Compromise of 1850 accomplished what it set out to do—it kept the nation united—but the solution was only temporary. Over the following decade the country's citizens became further divided over the issue of slavery. The rift would continue to grow until the nation itself divided.”⁵⁹

Birth of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in America

The question of slavery also became an issue that was debated hotly in Christian churches. On the national front in 1844, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church split into two conferences because of these tensions over slavery and other issues. Some anti-slavery clergy and laity of the Methodist Episcopal Church left to form the Wesleyan Methodist Church in America.⁶⁰

Locally, in 1843, the year before the split, at the Wheaton home of Joseph Chadwick, a first church—Wesleyan Methodist—was organized. The pastor was Reverend John Cross with charter members including Joseph and Avery Chadwick and their two daughters and their families. This young church soon affiliated with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in America.⁶¹ “By 1850 discontent surfaced with eastern universities which ignored [identified concerns] for temperance, abolition of slavery, and

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰This far by faith, http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_5.html (accessed January, 2011).

⁶¹David Maas, *A Bicentennial View: DuPage Discovery 1776-1976* (Wheaton, IL: Columbian Lithographing Co., 1976), 73.

opposition to secret societies.”⁶² In 1850 at a Wesleyan denominational conference held in Batavia, Illinois, a decision was made to found an educational institution dedicated to anti-slavery principles and to taking a stand against the evils of society.⁶³ By September of 1851 the Wesleyan conference had appointed a Board of Trustees and a subscription list was generated and near the top was the names of Warren and Jesse Wheaton and Erastus Gary.⁶⁴ “A local committee of Avery Chadwick, Jesse Wheaton, and Reverend John Cross secured donations of land, money, and labor.”⁶⁵ Nearly \$2,100 in gifts was collected in this initial solicitation. A site adjoining the Wheaton family property was chosen and depending on the historical account consulted, the Wheaton’s either donated forty acres to the Board or it was bid off to John C. Howard who later sold it to the Board for \$150. These families that eventually founded the Illinois Institute were a “Wesleyan group [who] withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church due to their dissatisfaction with the church on the slavery question, issues of liquor traffic, secret societies, and world amusements.”⁶⁶ Calling themselves Wesleyan Methodists, they gathered their resources and contracted with Howard to begin construction, drawing the limestone from Batavia quarries.⁶⁷ In the later work of 1935, Academy history teacher Gudrun Thorlakson, in her history of “History of Wheaton College Academy,” spoke of these

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Bechtel, *Wheaton College*, 19.

⁶⁴Kilby, *Minority of One*, 143.

⁶⁵Maas, *Bicentennial View*, 73.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Kilby, *Minority of One*, 144.

founding families in diction that metaphorically alludes to the cathedral building metaphor:

They wanted a “Temple of Learning, where principles from the foundation stone to the crowning pinnacle should be those of Justice and Equality—an institution decidedly reformatory and progressive in its character, whose efforts tend to the destruction of all secret abominations, and the overthrow of spiritual wickedness in high places.”⁶⁸

As the first limestone structure began to take shape, these founders, as it was described earlier in this paper,

kneeled in the prairie grass on the summit of the gradually sloping hill now crowned by the stately edifice known as Blanchard Hall. They dedicated the knoll and all that should be upon it to that God with whom they had boldly gone into the thickest of the fight, not only for the freedom of human bodies, but for the freedom of human souls from the bondage and penalty of sin. “This then was the foundation upon which the Academy was first established, upon which it still stands, and upon which by the grace of God, it will continue to stand.”⁶⁹

It was this devotion that eventually attracted abolitionist Jonathan Blanchard six years later to answer the call for leadership a half dozen years after its initial inception, a moment that has been memorialized, told and retold, in story and myth for over 150 years.

Reverend John C. Cross, 1853

These devout Wesleyans appointed the Reverend John C. Cross as the institute’s first leader/instructor, a post he would hold from December 14, 1853 to May of 1854 at

⁶⁸Black et al., *History of Wheaton Academy*, 6.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 6-7.

the same time as he continued to pastor the Wesleyan congregation.⁷⁰ Their opening of the school was “for the purposes of having a school that taught the principles they prized, and did not “smother out by repression or silence the working out of the ideals instilled into them by home training.”⁷¹ Initially classes were held in the basement because this first building eventually planned to be a two-story stone structure, approximately planned to be 45x70 feet, was not finished.

Reverend Charles F. Winship, 1855

Cross was succeeded by the Reverend Charles F. Winship, a graduate of Oberlin College who left the post in 1855 after only one year to become a missionary in Africa.⁷² While he left behind a three-story limestone building “finished for \$10,000 with fourteen rooms on the top floor,”⁷³ it was still a young educational institution trying to solve problems, not the least of which were “issues with heating” of those rooms. During Winship’s time, several “customs and practices were established [which lasted well into mid-century] such as the Tuesday-evening student prayer meeting, the Friday-evening literary societies, and the evangelistic meetings.”⁷⁴ In 1855 the state of Illinois granted a charter to the Illinois Institute and trustees were appointed by the Illinois Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.⁷⁵

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 21.

⁷⁴Ibid., 22.

⁷⁵Ibid., 23.

Reverend J. A. Martling, 1856

Rev. J. A. Martling was the principal following Winship in 1856. During his tenure there were 140 students in the first year followed by 270 in his second year.⁷⁶

Reverend Lucius C. Matlack, 1856

Miss Cholae Merric became head of the Academy and remained in that capacity from 1856-60 while Rev. Lucius C. Matlack was officially named president during the same time period. Matlack was a strong anti-slavery leader who often “showed his Abolitionist conviction by making his home available for runaway slaves.”⁷⁷ He was also one of the founders of the Wesleyan Church. It was, however, a difficult time in the nation’s history especially due to a financial depression in 1857-58. Gudrun Thorlakson’s “History of the Wheaton College Academy” stated that “in order to pay salaries to teachers, money was borrowed at the rate of fifteen percent interest, and the school property and even the property of the resident trustees was mortgaged.”⁷⁸ Eventually the Illinois Institute was left with a massive debt of \$6,000.⁷⁹ Many academies across the nation had to close their doors and actually the Institute was at a similar crossroads. In the words of then President Matlock: “We are continually doing one of two bad things, either sinking deeper into debt or consuming the vitals of the institution by devouring the endowment fund.....it is suggested as a last resort that the trustees make assignments

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷"The Uprooting, The Civil War Era, 1850-1870," in *DuPage Roots*, by Richard A. Thompson, 32-34 (Illinois: DuPage County Historical Society, 1985), 33.

⁷⁸Black et al., *History of Wheaton College Academy*.

⁷⁹Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 23.

announcing the immediate suspension of the Institute.”⁸⁰ Unable to see a way out of financial ruin, President Matlock resigned from the Board of Trustees. “The school was so deep in debt that its trustees seriously considered closing it.⁸¹ This would be just the first of several financially gloomy crossroads that would have to be traversed in the Academy’s long history.

The Blanchards

Jonathan Blanchard, 1860

At this first moment of near dissolution, 49-year-old abolitionist Jonathan Blanchard, former president of Knox College, answered the call from the Board of Trustees and more importantly listened to what he believed was a call from his God to take up this challenge. One of the first moves he made was to pursue a re-chartering of the school to allow it become Wheaton College and Wheaton College Academy. As recorded by the State of Illinois:

The Charter of the Illinois Institute enacted by the legislature of the state of Illinois, and approved February 15, 1855, is hereby repealed, and the present charter substituted in its place, and all manner of property, privileges, and immunities, therein granted to the trustees of the ‘Illinois Institute’ are hereby declared to rest in the trustees of Wheaton College, and all debts, contracts, and obligations of the former institution are good in law against the trustees of Wheaton College....”⁸²

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Maas, *Bicentennial View*, 74.

⁸²“*Centennial: 1853 to 1953*,” Brochure for Wheaton Academy Centennial Celebration (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy, 1953), 4.

Section 5 of the charter reads: The said Trustees may also attach to said College, an Academical or preparatory department.⁸³

The name change from Illinois Institute occurred because Jonathan secured a benefactor named Warren Wheaton to donate an additional fourteen acres of land condition free in exchange for a name legacy greater than any headstone would provide him as Illinois Institute was renamed Wheaton College and Wheaton College Academy.

Another change Jonathan orchestrated was changing the composition of the Board of Trustees so that majority control moved from the Wesleyans to the Congregationalists, the denomination Blanchard had aligned with during his time at Knox. Perhaps learning from experiences at Knox about the importance of Board support, he also placed on the Board some individuals who valued his leadership and positions on key issues. The Board minutes for the Illinois Institute for November 23, 1859 noted that after the opening prayer delivered by Jonathan Blanchard, seven new Congregationalists were added to the ten member Board, including a newly appointed Owen Lovejoy, brother of martyred abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy. Owen would later be an individual who introduced the bill to outlaw slavery in the United States.⁸⁴ The Board had numbered eleven and with Matlock's resignation, that dropped to ten Wesleyan Methodists. On December 29, 1859 a notice appeared in the *Congregational Herald* stating that

the college is hereafter under the control of orthodox Congregationalists with the cooperation of its friends and founders, the Wesleyans....The intention of the trustees is that the instruction and influence of the institution shall bear decidedly against all forms of error and sin. The

⁸³Ibid., 4.

⁸⁴Bechtel, *Wheaton College*, 18.

testimony of God’s Word against slave-holding, secret societies, and their spurious worships, against intemperance, human inventions in church government, war, and whatever else shall clearly appear to contravene the kingdom and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be kept good.”⁸⁵

As some authors would say, it was a Board that combined “Methodist ‘fire and evangelism’ with ‘pilgrim scholarship’ of old New England Congregationalism.”⁸⁶

Within six months of this reconfiguration, Blanchard had secured an additional twenty thousand dollars in new subscriptions, pledged by new friends and supporters of the cause, which only helped to create an air atmosphere of optimism. Faculty were now assured of their positions, and his first class had seven graduates (including three who had transferred from Knox College to follow him to Wheaton) as well as George H. Beecher of the famous Lyman Beecher family, a strong anti-slavery family Jonathan had forged ties with years earlier.⁸⁷

Origins of the Grassy Knoll Saga

Early on Jonathan affirmed the rehiring of the current faculty, one of whom was Oscar Fletcher Lumry, College and Academy professor of ancient languages and son of Rufus Lumry, one of the early settlers and pastor of the Wesleyan Methodist church which began in Wheaton in 1843.⁸⁸ It is most likely that Oscar Lumry’s following account found by this researcher in the *History of DuPage County* housed at the DuPage County Historical Society in downtown Wheaton is the original recounting—at least in

⁸⁵Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 37-38.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Kilby, *Minority of One*, 118.

⁸⁸Ibid., 151.

writing—of the now familiar story at the heart of the Academy and College’s organizational saga. The *History of DuPage County* was published by mapmaker and historian Rufus Blanchard in 1882, coincidentally the year that Charles Blanchard (no relation to Rufus) succeeded his father as president of the College. In it is a section of five pages titled “Wheaton College” that from the beginning describes the origins of the college. He writes:

About the year 1850, a movement was set on foot in the Illinois Annual conference of the Wesleyan Methodist denomination to establish an institution of learning somewhere in the State of Illinois. The originators of the scheme **were mostly men who had but little of this world’s goods and prized learning for the power that they saw it gave others**, rather than from any extensive realization of its benefits in themselves. They were real reformers, and were especially interested in the anti-slavery struggle which was then at its height.

They saw with deep concern the children of anti-slavery fathers and mothers, who were sent to college, where nothing was said against human bondage, soon losing their parents’ principles and concluding that if slavery were as bad as they had been taught at home to regard it, the teachers they had learned to reverence and love would say something about it. Their purpose as his father, who was one of them, has often told the writer, was not so much to start a denominational, sectarian school, as to **provide a place where their principles, by them prized and early taught to their children, should not be smothered out by being held in silence** by those who taught or destroyed by the active, despotic teaching of the times. Wheaton, offering the most favorable terms, was chosen as the seat of this school. Preparations for building began by **the founders kneeling in the prairie grass on the summit of the beautiful hill** now crowned by the stately stone edifice known as Wheaton College building, **and dedicated the hill and all that should be upon it to that God in whom trusting they had boldly gone into the thickest of the fight, not only for the freedom of human bodies, but of human souls as well....**⁸⁹

The author of this excerpt is listed as O. F. Lumry, self-described in the above excerpt as son of one of the founding parents who knelt in the prairie grass. In this

⁸⁹Oscar Lumry, “Wheaton College,” in *History of DuPage County*, edited by Rufus Blanchard, 174-179.

excerpt, the bold-faced words have been identified by this researcher because they occur over and over again in the recounting of this organizational saga identified in numerous artifacts and interviews reviewed throughout this paper. Lumry is describing an event that occurred only about thirty years before the publication of his narrative which is why he is likely the first teller of the story that becomes an integral part of the College and Academy's organizational saga.

In 1860, the same year that would find Abraham Lincoln elected as President of the United States, Jonathan Blanchard touted Wheaton's advantages as being a college which was: concerned with reform, accepting a large proportion of adult students, offering Boarding clubs and opportunities for seniors to read out essays at chapel services. Discipline was also emphasized with faculty given the power to suspend the disorderly. "There was to be no offensive or indecent conduct, no profaning of the Sabbath, no bad language, no 'playing billiards and like games,' no use of alcohol or tobacco, no disorder in the rooms, no 'throwing water, dirt, or other offensive things from the windows, no joining of secret society, and no marrying while in school....in short, everything is forbidden which will hinder and everything required which we think will help students in the great object for which they assemble here, which is improvement of mind, morals, and heart."⁹⁰

Much of Jonathan's time as college president was spent in fundraising to secure support for not only the everyday expenses of the college but to continue the expansion of the facilities. One of his main benefactors was John Payson Williston, inventor of

⁹⁰Kilby, *Minority of One*, 152.

indelible ink, after whom a building and one of Jonathan's children would be named.

Jonathan was not shy about asking. Another similar story comes by way of

L.C. Thompson of Wheaton, whose father served on the Board of Trustees for twenty-five years. The Thompsons owned a farm of sixty acres....The older Mr. Thompson and Jonathan Blanchard were warm friends and often discussed together the finances of the College and Mr. Thompson often made donations to it. L. C. Thompson continues: 'One day Jonathan Blanchard drove into the yard with two white horses. Tears were in his eyes as he told Dad that he was afraid the College would have to close. 'Not so bad as that,' said Dad: 'we'll see what we can do.' So Dad mortgaged the farm and gave the money to President Blanchard. The College was saved again.'⁹¹

The explicit request for money is an illustration of the practical turn of Jonathan Blanchard's Christianity. He believed in asking God for whatever was needed, but he never felt that asking God precluded a straightforward appeal to the people.⁹² He was convinced that God had great plans for the college and as a result he made frequent cross country trips, preaching along the way, to solicit funding for this institution that he hoped would help everyone to make progress to a more perfect society.

At the end of the first year the attendance had doubled to 208: 21 were college students, 143 were in the Academy, 17 were taking the "Ladies' Course," and 27 were in the junior and senior preparatory departments.⁹³ Due to the war effort in 1862-3, attendance was down with only 126 students, but the college was clear of debt. Jonathan

⁹¹Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 50.

⁹²Kilby, *Minority of One*, 164.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 152.

pledged “to see its means and advantages enlarged so that it shall be second in these respects to no institution in this country.”⁹⁴

A perfectly natural question is, Why did Wheaton College [and its Academy] continue to survive? For it had its perilous economic depressions in those early days and its share of both internal and external criticism. The answer may be found in its leaders. Time and again when it looked as though the College and Academy would have to close, the Blanchards and other leaders had sessions of earnest prayer, solicited funds from their friends, and with firm hands guided the school through threatening periods—their faith in God unshaken and their vision neither narrowed nor dimmed.⁹⁵

In 1868, with the slavery question settled by the war, Jonathan took up his second great reform with his publication of the *Christian Cynosure* in which “he began to show that secret societies are a menace to morals and the American way of life.”⁹⁶ His childhood memory still seared by the alleged Masonic lodge-backed murder of William Morgan, Jonathan made sure that the first catalogue of Wheaton College announced its stand against membership in secret societies. Soon after, the local chapter of the Wheaton Mason, perhaps to challenge Jonathan’s stance, persuaded fifteen college boys to join the lodge, a place of numerous parties and cotillions. When the college warned the students, “all but two withdrew and those two were suspended...In the fall of 1865 the Masons carried the matter to the Circuit Court and a verdict was given in favor of the college. The Masons then carried the matter to the Supreme Court of Illinois and lost again.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴Ibid., 153.

⁹⁵Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 49.

⁹⁶Kilby, *Minority of One*, 167.

⁹⁷Ibid., 169.

This was only the first of conflicts between those in favor of the lodges and those who sided with Jonathan Blanchard. Subsequent conflicts caused divisions in local churches and drew sharp lines of loyalty backed by pledges of money.

There were many who rallied to Jonathan and the college. The Wesleyans continued warmly to commend the school and urge their young people to choose Wheaton...and had proposed raising a hundred thousand dollars for endowment with the intent thus to make the school again Wesleyan, but it was finally agreed that the college should remain non-denominational...in the midst of these troubles [two longtime friends contributed sums of money] under a bond given by the college pledging to maintain forever the testimony of the school against secret societies and never allow a member of such to be chosen to the Board of Trustees.⁹⁸

It is also probably important to note the importance of the Board of Trustee's decision to remain nondenominational at this time and throughout the College's future. That decision preserved the College's independence and integrity as they avoided being subservient to the changing winds of denominational thought and dispute that have spelled doom for other colleges. Remaining independent has actually allowed students from a wider array of denominations to enroll at Wheaton, linked, of course, by their affirmation of its *Statement of Faith*.

The fight against the lodges soon was launched on a bigger stage as Jonathan, in December of 1879, was nominated as the American Party's candidate for President of the United States with a platform that included "prohibition, withdrawal of charters of all secret societies, civil equality, use of the Bible in the public schools, justice to the Indians, and abolition of electoral colleges. Jonathan wished to advocate woman suffrage

⁹⁸Ibid., 187.

but others in the party opposed that.”⁹⁹ For a time he was able to advance the cause on the political battlefield, but chronic health problems caught up with him so that by 1882 he even had to tender his resignation to the Board of Trustees at Wheaton College, yielding his seat to his more than capable son Charles Albert Blanchard. Not one to give up, Jonathan pledged to devote the rest of his life to the reforms advocated by the National Christian Association, chief among those the challenge presented by secret societies.¹⁰⁰

In reviewing the ingredients of this story birthed so long ago, Benne, Clarke, and Hargreaves undoubtedly would recognize the significance of the intersection of an “unsurpassable Christian vision” at once so engaging to all “intellectually, socially, and emotionally” and that addressed issues of social justice with the emergence of a leader (Jonathan Blanchard) at just the right time who had the capability of unifying students, faculty, and his Board to act with conviction to work toward creating this more “perfect society.”¹⁰¹ To understand the identity of Wheaton Academy and the College today, one must start as has been done, with a detailed look at this individual. As was aptly summarized in *Fire on the Prairie*, “If an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a single man, then for Wheaton College [and its Academy], that man was Jonathan Blanchard.”¹⁰² A man who dedicated himself to all that was “for Christ and His Kingdom.”

⁹⁹Ibid., 190.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 195.

¹⁰¹Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 6,

¹⁰²Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 25.

Charles A. Blanchard

Born in 1848, “the year of revolutions,” Charles Blanchard was named for Charles Albert, Duke of Sardinia because his “mother was greatly interested in the struggle for Italian freedom...I [Charles] have always remembered this fact and it has been in some measure an explanation of my own course in life. Named for one of the soldiers in the army of freedom, it has seemed to me that it would be unspeakably base not to have a share myself in the war.”¹⁰³

More than the power of his name, it was his early life experiences due to being the son of such committed parents who were activists and educators that made him nearly the equal of his father when it came time for him to lead Wheaton Academy and later the College. “One of the events of his childhood which left an indelible impression on his mind and from which he felt his whole life had been enriched was the opportunity he had of looking on Abraham Lincoln and listening while he talked. Of this occasion he says: ‘The great Lincoln I heard in the Lincoln-Douglas debate when [I was] a boy and it has never passed from my mind.’”¹⁰⁴ He especially noted Lincoln’s “evident appeal to conscience and humanity”¹⁰⁵ in his speeches.

Just a couple of years later, when he was twelve, the family moved from Knox College to Wheaton. In similar tones of respect and admiration to those used when

¹⁰³Frances Carothers Blanchard, *The Life of Charles Albert Blanchard* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932), 24.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 28-29.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

speaking of Lincoln, he described his father, Jonathan Blanchard, when he was President of Knox College:

He was a man of oak and iron. There was no lazy or cowardly blood in him. The thing that needed to be done he did not hesitate to undertake, and having put his hand to the plow, he never looked back. East and west, north and south he went, everywhere preaching the Gospel of Christian faith and thorough culture. He infected both young and old with his lofty ambitions....And it also followed that these young people who came to the college for an education were inspired with the same lofty ambition for Christian service which inspired their president.¹⁰⁶

Charles recounted for his wife Frances, the familiar story of Jonathan's decision to leave Knox for Wheaton.

When it was known that my father and mother were leaving Galesburg, they were called to four schools, and a church in Massachusetts. Of the four schools, the poorest and smallest was located at Wheaton, Illinois. It was a secondary school called the beautiful name of 'Illinois Institute'. It had been founded by a group of Wesleyan Methodists who had separated themselves from the Methodist church because of the complicity of the general conference with slavery and secret societies. Of course in those days—1850 and beyond—the dominating question was in connection with American slavery; those poor, humble, despised men were not willing that their children should be trained in schools where for any reason the rights of humanity were to be treated as a trifling matter. They were also opponents of the old system of special privileges which has wrought so much evil in the world."¹⁰⁷

Charles was twelve at the time of the move and was enrolled by his parents in the Academy where he spent two years. He described his work there to be "imperfectly done, streaked, better in some subjects than others; on the whole poor."¹⁰⁸ He described his

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 31.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 33.

teachers as well-trained but who had the challenge of working with a heterogeneous group of students:

There was no uniformity among us who flocked into those academy classes. Some had studied some things, others had studied other things, and some had not studied much of anything, but there were among us men and women of native powers....then as now, however, there was a steady effort to bring young people in the institution face to face with God and that is always helpful, no matter when or where it may be, and it did us good.¹⁰⁹ Another memory that surely left an impression on a fourteen year old Charles was a wagon trip he took with his father to the Montana gold fields in 1864 in search of gold to help with the college financial picture. Traveling across country through two states and five territories, he also learned from a young age what the financial pressures of being college president were like, a skill to stand him in good stead in the future.¹¹⁰

When older, Charles himself served as a teacher first at a school in Cook County, then in LaSalle County and later Lockport. He credited his success with his firsthand understanding of the difficulties facing the learner. He acknowledged that his gift for teaching was because “I knew every swamp and sandpit and chuck-hole into which a student was likely to fall. I had been through them myself.” After his first three teaching assignments, he “became a pupil-teacher” at the college. Prior to his admittance to the college, Charles gave testimony to the fact that the Academy, especially in the early days, was a mechanism for populating the freshman college class with students. He related that “There were, I think, no students admitted to the freshman class that year except those

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, “Charles Albert Blanchard,” Informational Brochure (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, 2010).

who had been studying in our own Academy. It was about the time of the close of the Civil War.”¹¹¹

At the age of nineteen, Charles delivered his first sermon and by the time he graduated from Wheaton College in 1870, he had presented 65 addresses on his father’s favorite topic, the evils of secret societies and lodges. After graduation he lectured as an agent for the National Christian Association, a reform organization dedicated chiefly to opposing freemasonry and other oath bound orders.¹¹²

Blanchard-Fischer Dynasty

While at Wheaton, one of his classmates was Herman A. Fischer who later became his brother-in-law as he married his sister Julia, “and who, when we graduated became at once (September, 1870) principal of the academy.”¹¹³ Charles would succeed him in that role years later when Fischer moved up to teach mathematics in the College. Both Fischer and Fischer’s father, at various times, made financial gifts to sustain the College and Academy.¹¹⁴ Fischer’s son, who was Jonathan Blanchard’s grandson, Herman Jr., in later years, became Chairman of the Board of Trustees. “It was to the firm and stabilizing influence of the Blanchard-Fischer dynasty covering the entire history of the College that the institution owes much of its nobility and its continued fealty to the

¹¹¹Ibid., 35, 43.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Frances Carothers Blanchard, *The Life of Charles Albert Blanchard* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1932.), 47.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 46.

original Christian ideals and objectives.”¹¹⁵ Symbolically, it was this very same Professor Herman A. Fischer who on November 27, 1925 in his last official act while alive, presided over the laying of the stone for the College’s new church on which was engraved the College motto: “For Christ and His Kingdom.”¹¹⁶ He would pass away two days later. Charles Blanchard, his brother-in-law and President of the College also died within a month on December 20, 1925. This Blanchard-Fischer dynasty to which Willard pointed in 1950 is one of the components Hargreaves speaks to when he outlined what is necessary for sustaining an organization’s vision over time. It is a “chain of influence” that can carry out the distributed vision years after the initial charismatic leaders are gone. Clarke also spoke about key groups of alumni and students whose shared experiences are memorialized in the saga and work to continue the vision by self-selecting and recruiting those who will follow in their footsteps. The Blanchard-Fischer alliance is one of several that over time have kept the Academy and the College true to their founders’ wishes.

Charles Blanchard and the National Christian Association

Prior to his graduation, Charles responded to a request to attend a Cincinnati convention of those opposed to secret societies and found himself pressed into being a speaker. So successful was he that he was invited to commit a year of his life to do lecture-work which he did starting in 1870 as general secretary of the National Christian Association, a reform organization dedicated chiefly to opposing Freemasonry and other

¹¹⁵Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 44.

¹¹⁶Blanchard, *The Life of Charles Albert Blanchard*, 202.

oath bound orders. His travels across the country enabled him, as it had his father before him, to make additional connections which would serve to cement the support—emotional and financial—for the Academy and the College. J. P. Williston of Massachusetts was one of many who became an important connection¹¹⁷ and like Fischer Williston’s name today adorns one of the older recently renovated dorms on campus known as Williston Hall.

After two years, Charles resigned only to find that when he returned to Wheaton, he was “asked to become principal of the preparatory department of Wheaton College,” or in other words to head up the Academy. He said, “It never occurred to me to decline the position. My compensation was to be a thousand dollars less than I had received the year before. I do not remember that at the time the loss of one thousand dollars from income affected my mind at all. The only mental activity I can remember concerning the matter was that here was a call to do some needy work and I was free to undertake it; that seemed sufficient.”¹¹⁸ Historian Gudrun Thorlakson indicated in her history of the Academy that:

Building Days began in 1872 when Charles Albert Blanchard came to take over the duties of the preparatory school. At that time the [college] consisted of one small lonely building in the midst of a beautiful fourteen acre campus ...During a period of ten years two additions were made to the main building [later called Blanchard Hall after his father], a woman’s dormitory, a gymnasium, a heating plant, and an industrial building [later known as Schell Hall and eventually housing the Academy] were erected.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Ibid., 57.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 74.

¹¹⁹Black et al., *History of Wheaton College Academy*.

Fundraising

Jonathan named his son Charles principal of this Academy in 1872, a post he would hold for five years, leaving it only when his father named him vice president of Wheaton College in 1879 and eventually president in 1882. He served in that presidential role for an amazing forty-three years, a time of change for the nation, the college, and the academy. “The total College enrollment at the beginning of his administration was 216, all but twenty-nine of whom were enrolled in the Academy. It is important to note that

...public secondary education was not provided in the town of Wheaton until 1876. Prior to that time many town residents desiring high school education attended classes at Wheaton Academy, which functioned as a department of the College, and the town reimbursed the Academy for the tuition charge. Many young people from small towns in Illinois and Wisconsin came to the Academy in those early years to secure the benefits of higher education. Older students were also present to secure high school training that had been denied them in their youth.¹²⁰

By the 1910s the collegiate enrollment had grown larger than the Academy’s and as that enrollment increased, so did the need for a more stable financial base. In some early fundraising efforts in 1898, Charles Blanchard traveled “to visit eastern donors in an effort to raise the school’s endowment from \$50,000 to \$150,000. As a result of increased endowment, a faculty salary schedule and retirement program was established and Wheaton emerged in the early 1900s as a stable financial institution.”¹²¹ During his tenure as President of the College, several buildings were added including the Industrial

¹²⁰Wheaton Academy Bulletin 5, no. 6 (1965), Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL

¹²¹Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections.

Building (now called Schell Hall) which was built in 1902 and in 1914 was turned over to the Academy for its use.

In 1915, when Charles Blanchard was serving as President of Wheaton College, he received an inquiry from the Congregational Educational Society who wrote to all presidents at that time and asked them for their “account of the present movement of spiritual forces and purposes in the Christian Colleges.”¹²² While a majority of these presidents pointed to a decline in spiritual focus, Blanchard issued what some categorized as an atypical response. His words clearly underscore the alignment of the College in 1915 to the original mission established by the founders and adhered to by his father Jonathan. In his letter he recounted as many have before and since the story of the founding of Academy and College:

This institution began in prayer, as most colleges have begun. Before there was a brick or a stone placed in a building on our campus, the founders, a little group of poor men who loved Jesus Christ and hated the things that antagonize his work, met and knelt in the prairie grass where our buildings now stand. They dedicated the land and all the things that were to be placed upon it, to the service of God, the interests of the Christian church. From that time to this present, this has been the key-note of our college life. Everything which has been done here has been done with reference to this dedication which lies at the foundation of all our college life....We do not appoint to positions in the college, teachers who are not confessed Christians and while we do not require direct Christian service, we expect it. Usually we are not disappointed. So far as our teachers are earnest and aggressive Christians, they use what influence they have to bring our students into life and to light more abundant.¹²³

Around the time of his sixty-fifth birthday, Charles reflected on what he described as the “main object of [his] life. Christian faith, the educational life of my nation and the

¹²²Burtchaell, *Dying of the Light*, 113.

¹²³Ibid.

world, the protest against the traffic in intoxicating drinks, the protest against narcotic poisons...the effort for the hallowing of the Lord's Day, the labors for the purifying of human society; in all these causes I have at least been permitted to bear my testimony.¹²⁴ Jonathan would have been proud.

Darien A. Straw, 1882-1910

Darien Austin Straw, born in Winnebago, Illinois in 1857 came from early years of life as a "hard working country lad" to Wheaton Preparatory School as a student in 1877. Finishing in two years, he enrolled immediately in Wheaton College and graduated in the spring of 1881. Following a year of teaching in Elmhurst, he returned in the fall of 1882, to become Dean of the Academy, a post he would hold for an amazing twenty-eight years. Simultaneously, he served as a teacher and head of the rhetoric and logic department in the College, and it is in this latter role that more of his contributions are more easily identified in historical records. Near the end of his career, one of his former students paid him tribute in a lengthy essay, now part of the compiled papers on Straw housed in the Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections. Quite a bit of this essay reveals Straw's love for working with students in educational settings. The student wrote: "His entire career as a Christian teacher had been spent in a garden, an academic garden, yes, God's garden, where he helped to produce the best possible plants and flowers to God's glory. His teaching years were spent in preparing the soil, sowing the good seed, weeding, watering, and harvesting. And this truly is education in the divine

¹²⁴Blanchard, *The Life of Charles Albert Blanchard*, 52.

sense.”¹²⁵ An article written in 1937, near his retirement, gives further evidence to the passion he brought to his students as he is quoted saying, “I undertake to give my students everything that is in me because I think the teacher is the only man in the world who can give himself away and still have more than when he started. I learn much more from my students than they from me.”¹²⁶ One thing for sure is that on his watch, the Academy entered the 20th century and according to a letter written much later in 1996 by Charles Blanchard’s descendant and future head of the Academy John Blanchard, the Academy Straw left in 1910 would over the next five years continue to be the “largest department in the College and serve as an important vehicle for helping [Charles Blanchard] develop his [and his father’s before him] vision.”¹²⁷

William F. Rice, 1915-1922

Finally during the second semester of the 1913-1914 school year, the teaching faculties of the Academy and the College were separated and in January of 1917, guided by Dean William F. Rice, the Academy was moved to a separate building and became a distinct institution in its educational organizations and classrooms.¹²⁸ He served as Dean until 1922 and during that time helped to equip the classrooms and laboratories with furniture and equipment, much of which he made with his own hands. Dean Rice’s

¹²⁵Darien Straw, papers and miscellaneous correspondence. Special Collections, Wheaton College Archives, Wheaton, IL.

¹²⁶“Wheaton’s Unofficial Dean Learns from his Student,” unnamed newspaper article, 1937, Special Collections, Wheaton College Archives, Wheaton, IL.

¹²⁷John Blanchard to Don Adams, April 20, 1995, letter in Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

¹²⁸*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 4, no. 2 (1963), Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL, 2

lasting legacy is that he helped to forge a separate identity for the Academy. For sixty-two years, even though it technically predated the existence of the College, it had been an educational institution seldom seen as more than a department under the auspices of the College. College and Academy students co-mingled in sports, dormitory life, literary societies and other activities. This nurturing relationship, while important in grounding the Academy in the values and visions of its founding fathers, admittedly limited its potential for developing as a school in its own right and also presented some problems for the College. Dean Rice understood that and worked to persuade others to support his vision that Wheaton Academy should become a distinct unit. Under his leadership the Academy became a member of the North Central Association, an agency that still exists to facilitate school reviews and improvement efforts today. Wheaton Academy today is believed to be one of the oldest remaining continuously accredited North Central Schools, first becoming a member in 1911. The recommendations that derived from an early NCA review addressed the need to raise standards and helped to fuel his recommendations to give the Academy a separate faculty and to move the classes physically to what was first known as the Industrial Building, subsequently, The Academy Building, and later renamed as Schell Hall.

Also in 1912, the Wheaton Academy Alumni Association was first organized under the guidance of newly elected Alumni Association President, Dr. Wendell S. Brooks, graduate of the class of 1904. This also served to underscore its separateness from the college. An early tradition of this organization was an end of the year banquet

to “which all former students and teachers of the Academy are not only invited but urged to be present to hear about the work of the school.”¹²⁹

As Gudrun Thorlakson said in her history, “During the last 30 years the Academy, through the efforts of its leaders, has become more of a separate entity. Progress in the Academy from 1914-1922 may well be attributed to the work of [this] scientifically minded individual and determined investigator.”¹³⁰ In 1922, Dean Rice left the Academy position to assume a teaching position in the College.

Edward R. Schell, 1928-1949

The next Dean/Director of the Academy of note was Edward R. Schell who held the position of Director of the Wheaton College Academy for twenty-seven years. This career path, according to a scrapbook memo excerpt entitled, “Farewell to our Director” found in the Academy archives, was not always what he had intended, for initially he had completed a course of training in engineering. Some health issues derailed his pursuit of that career and it was not until eleven years later that he saw an advertisement for Wheaton College listed in the *Sunday School Times* which attracted his attention. He applied, was admitted, and finished his college degree at Wheaton graduating in 1922.¹³¹ After graduating, he became principal of the practice school (departmental grammar school) at the college, a post he held for two years which showcased his potential for administration, enhancing his resume in preparation for what would come next.

¹²⁹*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* (1928), Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL

¹³⁰Black et al., *History of Wheaton College Academy*.

¹³¹“Farewell to Our Director,” unidentified newspaper article in anonymous scrapbook, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

Following in the footsteps of Dean Jesse W. Doolittle (served in 1922-24), Schell accepted and began his duties as Director of the Academy in September of 1924, taking off only one semester in 1927 to pursue graduate work. As would be true of so many top administrators of the Academy, his two children—Robert and Elizabeth—both attended the Academy and Wheaton College.

If Dean Rice is to be credited with successfully nurturing the individuality of the Academy, Dean Edward R. Schell should be credited with growth nearly on every front at the Academy. In 1923-24, the Academy school had an enrollment of 46 and a graduating class numbered eighteen; at his retirement the school enrollment had mushroomed to 174 students with a graduating class in 1949 of 45 seniors¹³² A letter he penned about his early years as Dean reveals much about his concerns over some of the early struggles of the school, and the encouragement shown by then President Charles Blanchard:

Writing about the Academy reminds me of my first registration. It was in the fall of 1924 and I had been praying so hard for a good enrollment because I knew that the school had been going down hill and the trustees were seriously considering closing it. But I was in for a big disappointment. There were just 46 students enrolled in high school classes and I think that this was the lowest in the history of the Academy. Of course college catalogues listed a larger number than this in the Academy because they included the old Practice School which I had charge of and took in all grades from one through eight. They also included the summer session. Several days after registration, I met President Charles Blanchard in the hall and he asked me about the Academy enrollment. With a long face I told him 46 and I can still remember his taking me by the arm as we went upstairs together and saying that he was sure that the Lord had a place for the school and although a number of others did not think the same he was going to stay

¹³²“Information written on scrapbook page,” unknown author, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

by the Academy a while longer. President Blanchard and our family lived in the same direction from the school and occasionally we walked home together. Several years after my first registration I was spouting to the President about our increased enrollment and plans for the future and when we came to the corner where our paths divided, he stopped and placing his kindly hand on my shoulder said, 'Young man, keep humble'. This has been a lesson for me ever since and I shall never forget the kindness and earnestness with which he said it.¹³³

Blanchard's support, coupled with Schell's humble leadership and pursuit of excellence advanced the development of the Academy in these early years. As Thorlakson said, "Under Dean Schell, there has been constant progress; there is nothing static in his administration. Every part of the building is utilized, and plans for greater efficiency are constantly being made."¹³⁴ She notes the expansion of the library from being just a small bookcase with a few technical books to a larger room with a circulation of 2,500 books, 20 complete sets of reference books and 100 pamphlets.¹³⁵

The curriculum also underwent change and expansion with the addition of new subjects "to benefit students by supplying subjects more suited to their needs in: industrial geography, commercial law, home economics, American democracy, typing, physiology, general science, and journalism."¹³⁶ Additional extracurricular activities were begun, most notably two academy societies were formed in place of an earlier literary

¹³³Yearbook (probably Wheaton College TOWER yearbook), page image of Schell's letter written in cursive, unknown year, found in Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

¹³⁴Black et al., *History of Wheaton College Academy*.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

society.”¹³⁷ The Academy during this period and to some extent in the years that followed served the needs of missionaries on the foreign fields who needed a Christian boarding school stateside to serve the educational needs of their children. One of the dorms for Academy boys was even known as “Missionary Home.” The mature or older student was still served at this time by the Academy but to a much lesser extent than in its early years. There was a brief resurgence of older students following World War II, but soon this was no longer a part of the vision of the Academy.¹³⁸

Academy Moves to Prince Crossing Road in West Chicago, 1945

1945 is a year that many relate to Hitler’s defeat, the destruction of Japanese cities and American boys returning home from war, but it was also as current Head of School Gene Frost would say in a 1994 Academy chapel address, an important “stone of remembrance” in the life of the Academy.¹³⁹ It was during the latter half of Dean Schell’s administration in 1945, that the Wheaton College Academy physically left the college campus to take up residence on a 34 acre campus on Prince Crossing Road, in West Chicago, Illinois, seven miles west of Wheaton. This campus was previously the Prince Crossing School for Crippled Children which was run under the auspices of the University of Chicago.

By 1949, the last year of Dean Schell’s administration, there were boys’ and girls’ dorms, ten classrooms, a library, kitchen and dining facilities, a large gymnasium, and

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ *Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 5, no. 5 (1965), Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

¹³⁹ Dr. Gene Frost, “Stones of Remembrance,” Chapel address (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, Spring 1994).

accommodations for five faculty families. Many of these physical improvements were made possible, in part, because of contributions from past alumni and LeTourneau Gymnasium was no exception.

LeTourneau Gymnasium, 1948

Until 1946 sporting events at the Academy took place outside or in Wheaton College facilities seven miles away. In the fall of 1946 through the efforts and financial support of alumni R. G. LeTourneau and John M. Oury, concrete foundations were poured for a new gymnasium and a steel framework was erected. Robert C. Van Kampen led the Academy Advisory committee along with efforts by the Academy student body and their “Light the Gym” drive to raise funds for the flooring and electrical work. On March 18, 1948, a dedication program message by LeTourneau, followed by a dedicatory prayer by Chaplain Willard and then an Academy vs. Alumni basketball game celebrated the opening of the barn shaped athletic facility.¹⁴⁰

By the time of Schell’s retirement, the Academy had been relocated to Prince Crossing for five years and in his final year it was noted that “the physical education program was greatly improved by the construction of a gymnasium, tennis courts, and a baseball diamond. The music department has also been enlarged and improved.”¹⁴¹ At his retirement, Dean Schell was named Director Emeritus and continued to serve for a few weekly hours in administrative duties and counseling which should have been of immense help to the newly appointed director Robert L. Gilbert. Wheaton College also

¹⁴⁰Information written on scrapbook, unknown author (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives).

¹⁴¹Ibid.

honored Schell with the honorary degree of doctor of laws at the June 13 commencement in 1949. Historian and Academy teacher Thorlakson chose to include a poem written by a student to capture this period in the life of the Academy:

Along a Progress road I've come
 Successful, firm, and strong I've grown.
 I lift my hope to higher plains
 For I have labored not in vain,
 Nor tarried yet on sinking sand;
 For I've been led by God's own hand.¹⁴²

Clyde S. Kilby's Study of the Academy, 1944

The moving of the Academy to its Prince Crossing Road site five years prior to Schell's retirement was not accomplished without a comprehensive study of all of the issues, so it is important to backtrack to this point in time to understand the rationale that led to this most important moment in the life of the Academy, a moment which effectively closed the chapter on one aspect of its life only to open another more intriguing one.

In the years that followed the Academy's move to the Industrial Building, later named Schell Hall, increasing enrollment used up the available space. Though there was some discussion of "a new and enlarged Academy as part of a centenary project,"¹⁴³ this did not satisfy parents who resorted to praying for a different solution because they were

¹⁴²Black et al., *History of Wheaton College Academy*.

¹⁴³*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 4, no.2 (1963). Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Academy, 2.

unhappy when told their sons and daughters would have to be placed on a waiting list as there was no room in the current facility.

So it was that on February 15, 1944 then Wheaton College President Edman wrote a note to “My dear Dr. Kilby” informing Dr. Clyde S. Kilby that at a recent Trustee Committee meeting on February 12, it was suggested that a “further study be made of conditions in the Academy, with a view to enlarging its faculty and facilities and improving its offerings.”¹⁴⁴ Edman informed Kilby that the committee suggested his name and hoped that he would be able to undertake such a report to be delivered back to them by May 15 to ready it for the annual meeting of the Trustees in June of 1944. This researcher was surprised to learn of Kilby’s involvement for during her time at Wheaton College, his internationally known reputation was based on his work in the College English Department and as an expert on the works of C. S. Lewis. Kilby founded The Wade Collection which today houses the original manuscripts of Lewis, Tolkien, Charles Williams, and others in a group known as *The Inklings*. Kilby was a beloved professor of English, a past head of the English Department, and curator of this world respected special collection. It seems, however that in 1944, prior to his fulltime employment in the English Department, he served the College at least part time in some administrative capacities.

Kilby’s report included sections of summative fact finding in regards to enrollment, faculty employed, courses offered, but the heart of his findings (formatting

¹⁴⁴Raymond V. Edman to Dr. Clyde S. Kilby, letter, February 15, 1944, Special Collections, Wheaton College Archives, Wheaton, IL

used here is found in the original report by Kilby) are found in *Section II. Suggestions and Recommendations* as follows:

The basic principle: My experience leads me to feel very keenly the wisdom of the following principle not only as it applies to the Academy but as it may apply to any other branch of our work: NOTHING SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE WITH THE BUILDING OF THE BEST POSSIBLE LIBERAL ARTS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE. A Christian school seems especially beset by parents or others who wish its offerings expanded or its scope enlarged. Often these requests are for things excellent in themselves, but I believe that if they dissipate in any measure the real goal of the college, they are undesirable. **Possibilities of change in the Academy:** It appears that one of three courses of action is now appropriate: 1. To make plans for a separate and distinctive Academy. 2. To continue the Academy as at present. 3. To discontinue the Academy and make use of its facilities to better the College.¹⁴⁵

Kilby discussed each of the three options citing advantages and disadvantages and presenting comparative research he had gathered on other academies such as Stony Brook, Pillsbury, Friends, and Mount Hermon. Though this archival report does not appear to include his recommendation on which of the options he thought best, one can derive some of the issues of concern that existed in 1944 and that seemed to echo Kilby's earlier stated concern that nothing be allowed to derail the forward motion of Wheaton College. He suggested that the Academy and College would be better off if a separate Board of Trustees was established for the Academy. Reading his comments carefully reveals a sense that Kilby believed the Academy was taking up space that the college sorely needed for its own programs and was consuming funding better used for the College's goals. He cited the reclamation of space and funding as advantages to be gained if the Academy ceased operation and/or moved off campus. If the Academy were

¹⁴⁵Clyde S. Kilby, "Study of the Wheaton College Academy" (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, May, 1945).

to continue, Kilby stressed the importance of providing the Academy with its own Board of Trustees “who could push the work of the Academy without detracting from that of the College.”¹⁴⁶

Kilby’s recommendations also addressed some of the current shortcomings of the school. He advised “children from divided homes, only children, problem children from wealthy homes, and even faculty or staff children whose conduct has been poor, should be carefully limited.”¹⁴⁷ He warned against continuing a practice of allowing the Academy summer session to “cater to public-school failures [for it does not] enhance the establishing of a good tradition in the Academy.”¹⁴⁸ He recommended that the number of men on the faculty should be increased, an obvious reference to the gender draining effects of World War II and that “every possible effort should be made to stabilize the faculty. An academy, even more than a college, seems to exist on the traditions it creates, and the faculty is probably the most significant factor in developing a continuing morale.”¹⁴⁹ He referenced a need for the Academy salary scale to be adjusted so as to “recruit and hold strong teachers,” and he backed Dean’s Schell’s request that the “Academy pupils have a separate dining hall as it appears that contacts between College and Academy people have not helped either group.” He also stated that the practice of admitting for a tryout period “some high school graduates whose work was not very good” should be discontinued particularly as applications were up. He continued, “The

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

Academy is charged by many as being a reform school. Every effort should be made to abolish this concept.”¹⁵⁰

Kilby’s report seems to end by summarizing the objections to the discontinuance of the Academy which he concluded would be “the abandonment of this opportunity for Christian education at the high-school level, particularly at a time when the demand for such training seems on the increase.”¹⁵¹ He also referenced the loss of the Junior Academy [junior high school age] to serve as students for practice teaching and the loss of a convenience for faculty and staff who have children of that age. He also referenced the fact that the “Academy is a source of students for the College, but it appears likely that many of these students would enter the College anyway.”¹⁵²

While Kilby directly avoided making a specific recommendation leaving that for Edman’s committee, it is clear that the committee read his report and recommended that the Academy have its own campus.¹⁵³ The April 1963 *Wheaton Academy Bulletin* states that:

about that time Academy freshmen had charge of a chapel program in which they presented Dr. Edman with a \$25.00 bond toward a new Academy building. He accepted it graciously and said it would be laid aside and used fifteen years hence no doubt. Fifteen *days* later negotiations were in progress for the present campus of Wheaton Academy. Negotiations were completed in June, and in September 1945 classes opened.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 11.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid., 12.

¹⁵³*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 4, no.2 (1963) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives).

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 2.

What is fascinating about Kilby's summative report is that it foreshadows so many of the philosophical and foundational problems and misalignments that continued to plague the Academy and hindered its growth—despite the move to Prince Crossing Road—until the early 1990's when some courageous and critical decision making occurred that righted the ship.

Significance of the Move in 1945

The significance of the move under Schell's watch was more than can be simply summarized by a change of address card. This change of location for the Academy to its current Prince Crossing Road site was a move to a setting that would allow it eventually to find its own identity separate from the College, with an opportunity to begin anew its story. A story not unrelated to the saga of the College, for the reader should remember that the birth of the original Academy, the Illinois Institute, predated the birth of the College by six years. But in some very real way, as when a young adult finally moves out of the family home, the Academy was embarking on the next phase of its development, one sure to be fraught with challenges along the way to its current success. The Academy was fortunate to have Schell, a 27 year director, present for awhile to ease these early transitional years. In 1949, his retirement took his steady hand off the wheel and marked what perhaps is the beginning of the Academy's middle period of challenges and growth. A final tribute to him was paid in poesy by noted Wheaton poet Frank Earl Herrick who wrote the following poem titled, "Dean EDWARD R. SCHELL":¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Frank Earl Herrick, "Dean Edward R. Schell," in papers of Dean Schell (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections).

Clear-eyed, soft-voiced, kindly and keen,
 He moves among us day by day,
 Decorous, sage and grave and gay,
Reserved, tranquil, strong and serene!
He walks along Life's avenues
 With flowers upon either side—
 The sweet of face and tender-eyed—
Fresh with the Morning's gentle dews!
A husbandman of the high Hill,
 A sower faithful and benign,
 He trains the tendril and the vine
With wisdom and unerring skill!
The sun of Faith shines down on him,
 Its stars keep vigil in the night,
 He sees his way by that true Light
Whose deathless ray shall not grow dim!
To-day we crown with loving bays
 This veteran in doing good,
 And Wheaton's mighty brotherhood
Bestows its blessing with its praise!"

Organizational Ethos: *Statement of Faith and the Standards of Conduct*

At least two types of documents have guided the behavior and practices of the College and Academy over the span of their more than 157 year history. Before moving forward with our understanding of the Academy story, it is important to take some time to understand the evolution and early development of these two important policy documents that continue even today to inform our understanding of administrative decision making events in the life of the school.

The “Statement of Faith,” first adopted in 1926 and reaffirmed annually by Boards of Trustees, faculty, and staff, “provides a summary of Biblical doctrine that is consonant with evangelical Christianity.”¹⁵⁶ The second of these Statements describes standards of behavior or conduct and has perhaps been one of the more controversial lightning rods for the College. In short, the first is about the beliefs to which the members of the organization subscribe and the second defines expectations—even rules—about behaviors and practices that naturally follow from and support that set of beliefs. These beliefs and expectations not only applied to the students making application for admission but especially were important as a set of criteria in line with institutional values that was used to evaluate the candidacy of those who were applying for positions at the Academy.

To understand the importance of the formation of the Statement of Faith and the Standards of Conduct, it might be helpful to first review the following excerpts from an

¹⁵⁶“Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Standards and Responsibilities,” report to the Wheaton College Board of Trustees (Wheaton, IL: Ad Hoc Committee on Standards and Responsibilities, April 1974).

actual Academy archival document which are from an appointment questionnaire for Mary Reese Curtis, a Wheaton College 1944 graduate with a BA in literature and education, who applied to be the Dean of Girls at the Academy, a position she held until she became ill in 1946. The questions she had to answer were:¹⁵⁷

1. How long have you been saved?
2. Of what church are you a member?
3. Do you accept and believe the doctrinal platform of Wheaton College? (note: the back side of her printed application contains nine “We believe...” statements that were adopted in 1926 forming the doctrinal platform as well as a Standards of Faith/Life paragraph)
4. Do you believe that the account of creation as given in Genesis is correct?
5. What is your opinion of the theory that man is biologically descended from and/or genetically related to other forms of animal life?
6. Are you connected with any secret society?
7. Do you use tobacco or other narcotic drugs in any form? Dance? Play cards? Attend the theater or moving picture theater? Or engage in other worldly practices such as these?
8. Will you to the best of your ability through the enablement of God’s grace so to teach and so to live your entire life as to give testimony and hearty support to the standards of faith and life printed on page 4?
9. If married, will your wife give sympathetic support to these same standards of faith and life?
10. May the College be reasonably confident that your home life will be spiritually consistent with the standards of the college?
11. Do you recognize a position in Wheaton College is at least in part a missionary calling?

¹⁵⁷Mary Reese Curtis, “Wheaton College Academy employment application” (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 1944).

12. What do you understand the proper relation of a teacher to the moral and spiritual lives of his pupils to be?

13. Are you prepared to lead a young person to accept Christ as his savior?

Page 4 to which the above question alludes describes the “Wheaton College: Standards of Faith and Doctrinal Platform” and was introduced with the following words:

“Wheaton College has always stood for an orthodox gospel. Owing to the tendency, in modern times, to explain away the historic faith of Protestantism by discrediting or giving unnatural meanings to the words of Christ and the doctrines of the Scriptures, efforts have been made to restate the orthodox faith in positive unequivocal words.”¹⁵⁸

The doctrinal statement to which Mary Curtis was asked to affirm is reprinted below but notes that it was originally prepared by a group of religious leaders at a meeting in Philadelphia in 1920, one of whom was President Charles A. Blanchard.

It is not claimed that this statement, or any modern creedal statement, is inspired or authoritative except in so far as it correctly interprets the inspired Scriptures. Since, in its essential points, it affirms the faith in God as our Father and Creator, and Christ, His son, as our risen Lord and Redeemer, and in the Bible as God’s inspired word, beliefs on which Wheaton College was founded, and for which it stands, as a continuation of the testimony of our late and beloved President, Charles A. Blanchard, the Board of Trustees of Wheaton College on March 3, 1926, adopted this preamble with the following statement as the testimony or “platform” of Wheaton College:

1. We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writing, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.
2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man.

¹⁵⁸“Wheaton College: Standards of Faith and Doctrinal Platform,” in papers related to April 1974 “Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Standards and Responsibilities” (Wheaton, L: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections).

4. We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also that spiritual death which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and in the case of those who reach moral responsibility, become sinners in word, thought, and deed. (By this statement we affirm our belief that man was created by a direct act of God in His image, not from previously existing creatures, and that all of mankind sinned in Adam and Eve, the historical parents of the entire human race.)
5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.
6. We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, of His ascension into heaven, and in His present life there for us as High Priest and Advocate.
7. We believe in “that blessed hope,” the personal, premillennial, and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
8. We believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.
9. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the lost.

This statement of faith was first compiled and adopted by The World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) at its first meeting in Philadelphia in 1919 as a way of crystallizing foundations of orthodox faith many believed were in danger of alteration due to the “modernist-fundamentalist controversy.” According to Bechtel, “Many students of the Bible associated the controversy primarily with the 1920s, when ‘American Protestantism was seized with a paroxysm of contention over the source of authority in Christianity, the validity of the theory of evolution, and the techniques of Biblical criticism’.”¹⁵⁹ The questioning of the tenets of orthodoxy was fueled by those returning American scholars who had completed graduate study in German universities,

¹⁵⁹Paul M. Bechtel, “Fundamentalism,” *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* 5 (1944).

thought to be the source of modernist thought in these areas.¹⁶⁰ The WCFA drew 6,000 people from 42 states. At this first convention it organized into five committees, one of which was headed by Charles Albert Blanchard, Wheaton's second president and one-time principal of the Wheaton College Academy. Blanchard was also sought by a third committee charged with preparing "a nine-point creedal statement," which included allegiance to the verbally inspired and inerrant Bible, and the personal, premillennial, imminent return of Christ. Frances Carothers Blanchard states in her *Life of Charles Blanchard* that her husband was called in to assist the committee after it had labored for some days and had experienced difficulty in making a clear, succinct statement. "Within a very short time President Blanchard had the difficulty solved. The order and wording he suggested was used and the Declaration of Faith, as he formulated it, was offered to the conference and unanimously adopted."¹⁶¹

Interestingly, prior to this time Wheaton College had no such written set of faith statements, nor apparently saw no need of such as the leadership, trustees and students simply made a commitment to the Christian faith. The 1920's, however, were a time when many colleges and universities began to drift from their founders' Christian roots, specifically in the face of evolution and other more "modern" theorists. Some of this collegiate drift the reader will remember is what was chronicled in Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light*, referenced in earlier sections of this paper. After the convention,

¹⁶⁰Bechtel, *Wheaton College: A Heritage Remembered*, 91.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 92-93.

Charles Blanchard presented the Statement of Faith to the faculty and trustees for review, covered by a letter including this statement:

I am frequently asked these days whether our trustees and faculty believe in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. I always say as far as I have knowledge they do. In order however, to be able to speak with authority I need to have a word with you. I am therefore enclosing to our people a few items which seem to be fundamentals of Christian faith. I shall be glad to know whether so far as you have knowledge you believe the things here stated, if there is any one of them which you do not believe, I should be glad to have mention made of the fact. What I want is to be able to answer this question.¹⁶²

Only two responded and essentially said they agreed but offered their opinions that they did not understand why such a document might be necessary. According to Bechtel, historian and 1953 Wheaton alumni Thomas Askew, there were two benefits from Blanchard's actions: "it committed the school to a fixed theological position that guarded against philosophical change and it was a means of preserving Wheaton's continued orthodoxy after Blanchard's demise."¹⁶³

Though Blanchard would not live to see its final adoption by the Board of Trustees on March 3, 1926, essentially at the same time J. Oliver Buswell was elected the next President to replace the deceased President, he did know that the College's Executive Committee approved it on July 14, 1924. While the Blanchards may have had a combined sixty-five years of commanding charisma, spiritual authority and wisdom that guided the College and academy during their formative years, there has been no greater

¹⁶²Ibid., 93.

¹⁶³Thomas A. Askew, *The Liberal Arts College Encounters Change* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1969), 269.

insurance policy bequeathed by Charles Blanchard than this Statement of Faith which insures that successive generations of this nondenominational College and its Academy would stay aligned with the founders' Christian intents.

A review of the original nine point 1928 document with the current twelve points included on the Statement of Faith posted on the College website ¹⁶⁴reveals that some changes to the College's *Statement of Faith* have been made over time, usually as points of clarification or in reaction to issues of debate at hand. For example, the word "premillennial" has been removed even though once debates were endlessly held about whether the Lord would return to claim those Christians remaining on earth before (premillennial) or after (post millennial) the Biblically described thousand year reign. Interestingly, Jonathan's post millennial beliefs stood in opposition to his son Charles who believe in pre-millennialism. Jonathan's urgency to create his "perfect society" was, therefore, a requirement to usher a thousand years of peace and purity to hasten the return of Christ to collect the believers. Charles, on the other hand, was focused more on trying to practically limit immoralities all the while expecting a more imminent return of Christ to rescue believers from a very imperfect world. Removing the word, as was done in later years, allows those who found credence in each theory to still gather around the *Wheaton Statement of Faith*.

Another example is that President Edman had the following footnote added over a half century ago to address concerns that Wheaton might be embracing evolution:

"Wheaton College is committed to the Biblical teaching that man was created by a direct

¹⁶⁴."Wheaton College, About Us, Mission," http://www.wheaton.edu/welcome/aboutus_mission.html (accessed November, 2010).

act of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race." ¹⁶⁵

The essence of the original foundational beliefs are, however, firmly intact. Interestingly, the Academy's nine point document entitled, "Statement of Faith" ¹⁶⁶ is an actual Article printed in the Wheaton Academy By-Laws and deviates very little from the original 1926 document. Like the college, the word "pre-millennial" has been omitted and a nineteen word series of phrases that the College later added on this same point have also been added by the Academy, but none of the other changes made by the College have subsequently been adopted by the Academy perhaps because they were made at a time when the Academy was on the road to independence and they were not involved in the discussion. For all practical purposes, the current Statement of Faith document at Wheaton Academy is nearly identical to that approved under Charles Blanchard's watch for the College and the Academy.

Standards of Conduct

Chicago used to, and perhaps still does, connote for many around the world a city engraved with the excitement and danger of the roaring twenties. This researcher remembers being confronted on a Wheaton summer overseas study program in the 1970's by non-English speaking Europeans, who when they found out Chicago was my home, smiled and formed their hand into the shape of a gun and said "bang, bang....Al Capone," pleased with themselves for conveying so quickly their understanding of this American

¹⁶⁵Bechtel, *Wheaton College: A Heritage Remembered*, 93.

¹⁶⁶"Wheaton Academy Statement of Faith,"
http://www.wheatonacademy.org/RelId/606436/ISvars/default/About_WA.htm

metropolis in the few words of English they could muster. Similarly, those who have gravitated to a superficial understanding of Wheaton College usually point to their knowledge of the College by referencing “The pledge” only to interject “Isn’t that the college where you can’t drink, dance, or play cards?” Certainly, these delineated behavioral standards encapsulated in the *Standards of Conduct* have been distinctive features of the College and to some extent the Academy, but like many such codes of conduct, they have evolved over time. What must be examined is the extent to which the ethos of the organization has been circumscribed by these codes and to what extent over time they still reflect expectations for behavior that are close to the intents of the founders of this organization.

The archival collections at Wheaton College and at Wheaton Academy contain several documents that reveal much about the expectations for students and staff that clearly echo the tenets of behavior espoused by founder Jonathan Blanchard. As previously stated, the College’s *Standards of Conduct*, dating from 1860, over time has enjoyed numerous reviews, new names, and many revisions. In April of 1974, an eleven member faculty-student “Long Range Planning Subcommittee” delivered a comprehensive review of the Colleges’ existing statement entitled, “Responsibilities for Membership in the Academic Community of Wheaton College.” This 1974 report titled, “Report of the ad hoc committee on Standards and Responsibilities,”¹⁶⁷ began with a

¹⁶⁷“Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Standards and Responsibilities,” Report to the Wheaton College Board of Trustees (Wheaton, IL: Ad Hoc Committee on Standards and Responsibilities, April 1974).

review of the history of the College's standards of conduct. The report states that the Standards of Conduct date from 1860:

In 1865 they were labeled "Rules"; in 1901 the designation became "Supervision", in 1929 "Standards of Life", in 1935 "Standards of Conduct". In 1933 the idea of a contract between college and students was introduced. Since 1948, the rationale is generally that, because the college is responsible for the spiritual growth of students, it adopts standards conducive to an environment that will promote that growth.¹⁶⁸

The report also included reminders that the College's rules are the continuing evidence of the historic relationship between the College and:

both the Puritan and Pietist heritages in American evangelicalism. Both the Puritans in their attempt at a Christian society and the Pietists in their concern for the moral and spiritual growth of individuals, attempted to do something about the social evils of the day and to develop a more acceptable life-style. Rules about the use of alcoholic beverages and about membership in secret societies, for instance, grew out of these concerns.¹⁶⁹

Over time, some of the specifics of the rules have been reviewed and either altered or upheld. The report noted at one point in the distant past that, "billiards, all games of chance, opera and theater were forbidden, along with whatever is 'adverse to the improvement of minds, morals, and hearts.'"¹⁷⁰ Prior to this 1974 report the most recent change to the rules was in 1967 and allowed students to attend movies and other theatrical productions but urged "Christian discretion in the choice of all entertainment and literature."¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

The reviews over time have not always recommended deletions. The 1967 committee voted to add a prohibition on gambling in any form which was approved and even though it recommended the addition of a rule against card playing, the larger committee did not approve that. It did, however, modify the 1914 rule against “dancing” to allow “folk games” and changed “dancing” to read “social dancing.”¹⁷²

These “rules” have appeared in a variety of important documents that find their way into the hands of prospective and current students as well as faculty and staff. “Throughout the mid ‘30s the Bulletins of Wheaton Academy continually repeat the Academy concern for “wholesome social development” and states that “positive moral and spiritual influences are sought and encouraged.”¹⁷³

Excerpts from a 1943 Wheaton College application form read as follows:¹⁷⁴

The following statement is a summary of the rules governing conduct: All are required to abstain from the use of alcoholic liquors and tobacco, card playing, dancing, attendance at theaters (including moving picture theaters), and meeting of secret societies. Students who are not willing to cooperate to maintain the Wheaton ideals of college work and life will be invited to withdraw whenever the general welfare demands it, even though there be no special breach of conduct calling for suspension....To what extent, if any, have you used tobacco within the past twelve months?
 _____(this space must not be left blank). If admitted to Wheaton College, I agree to abide by the above regulations and any others which may be in force during my stay in Wheaton
 _____(signature)_____date

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 5, no. 6 (1965) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives).

¹⁷⁴“Wheaton College 1943 Student Application Form,” application form found in papers related to Wheaton Academy (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, 1943).

Another archival record from the *Wheaton College Academy Application for Admission* in 1943 clearly details conduct expectations that show a similar derivation:

Rules Governing Student Conduct¹⁷⁵

1. Students – except those living at home–must get permission to leave town from their Dean.
2. Students permitted to leave town must tell the hostess what time they expect to return, and
3. Young women must not go out of town with young men, nor go riding without a chaperone.
4. Students are not permitted to attend theatres, movies, or secret societies, to dance, use tobacco, or play cards, or other games of chance.

They were asked to sign that they had read the rules and, if admitted, would agree to abide by the rules. Another archival document from 1946, in words attributed to Dean Edward R. Schell, was used to gather information on applicants to Wheaton College Academy:

“...We hope to ascertain whether the applicant is likely both to be helped by the Academy and to be a help. We aim to admit only young people of good character and some ability; for we have found that boys and girls who have not made a good record at home are not commonly successful away from home....”

1. “What kind of record has the applicant made in school work up to the present time?”
2. What do you think of the applicant’s ability and disposition as a student?
3. What can you say of the applicant’s general conduct and reputation up to the present time?
4. What do you consider the good qualities of the applicant?
5. Do you know of any serious weaknesses or faults of the applicant?
6. Has the applicant to your knowledge been at all addicted to: the use of tobacco, profanity, dishonesty, the use of liquor?

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

STANDARDS of LIFE

All Students and faculty members are required to abstain from practices which tend to wasting of time and weakening of body and mind, such as the use of alcoholic liquors and tobacco, card playing, dancing, attendance at theaters (including moving picture theaters), and meetings of our membership in secret societies. Our testimony is united against such false social theories as collectivism, socialism, or communism, and in favor of such moral principles as the prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

Even though the Academy had been relocated to Prince Crossing Road in 1945, it was still under the protective arm of the College and eighty-six years after Jonathan Blanchard was first appointed as President, his belief system about the dangers of certain social evils and practices are clearly seen in these application documents for both Academy students and employees.

Years later, in 1980, 75-year-old Dr. Evan Welsh, Wheaton College's first chaplain serving from 1955-1970, and an individual this researcher met one night during freshman year in 1973, was interviewed by Mark Dawson for the College newspaper *The Record*. The interview¹⁷⁶ focused on his memories of past presidents and some of their decisions. Of Charles Blanchard, he recounted:

He was one of the most striking-looking men that ever lived. He was about six-two, well built, had snowy white hair, a snowy mustache, and piercing black eyes. But he was very gentle, very loving, very firm, and very courageous. He treated the College like his family. He had deep convictions on salvation, holy living and the Law of God.'

Welsh went on to say that Charles Blanchard had insisted 'that Wheaton maintain its doctrinal integrity in the face of rising modernism in the evangelical world.' Even so, in the 1920s evangelicalism began to shift away from the ideals of the Blanchards.

¹⁷⁶Mark Dawson interview of Dr. Evan Welsh, newspaper article, *Wheaton College Record* (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, 1973).

‘Churches became prophetic centers,’ Welsh said. ‘I remember in chapel in 1925, an outstanding speaker telling us that it looked like 1926 was surely the day of the Lord’s coming. They were so preoccupied with eschatology that they neglected the social aspect of the gospel that had been big in (Jonathan) Blanchard’s day.’ With the sudden death of Charles Blanchard in 1925, the college invited J. Oliver Buswell to take the presidency. Describing Buswell as ‘an excellent scholar, a strong speaker and a great theologian,’ he added that Buswell was committed to being separated from the old-line denominations. Welsh praised Buswell for getting Wheaton accredited in spite of hostility from secular educators because of the college’s evangelical stance. He also complimented Buswell for his doctrinal convictions, his emphasis on good scholarship, and for doubling the student population. According to Welsh, Buswell introduced the [more formalized] pledge to assure the Christians of his day that Wheaton would not “go down the drain” once the Blanchards were gone.¹⁷⁷

For a institution not tied to any denomination, it is clear that these two Statements have been important in anchoring both the Academy and the College throughout the decades of increasing secularism that have caused so many educational institutions to drift from the their founders’ intents. Later sections of the paper will include discussion that reveals the extent to which both the Statement of Faith and the Standard of Conduct documents remained important in the life of the Academy in subsequent years.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

College Motto “For Christ and His Kingdom”

Derived from the words of the larger than life Jonathan Blanchard, the motto “For Christ and His Kingdom,” has been referenced or reiterated almost incessantly in publications, chapel addresses, in policy documents, as well as engraved on cornerstones and other architectural pediments on campus over the 150 plus years of the life of the College and the Academy. An excerpt from a College Faculty Bulletin owned by Academy teacher Gudrun Thorlakson¹⁷⁸ reminded all associated with the Wheaton family—College and Academy—of the origins of the motto and how he gave symbolic expression to the original founders’ purposes in the creation of the Illinois Institute.

A very superficial search into the records of the college reveals the fact that it is a college with a purpose. That purpose is stated in the college motto, ‘For Christ and His Kingdom.’ That motto since the 1930 Catalogue number of the College Bulletin has been printed on the top of the first page of every issue and that was engraved on the corner stone of the central building in 1920, has a history that goes back much earlier and has an even greater significance. In the brief autobiography of President Jonathan Blanchard he states, “I came to Wheaton in 1860, still seeking a college ‘for Christ and His Kingdom.’ But as the above quotation suggests, the history of the motto of the college goes back further. During those crucial years when Jonathan Blanchard was President of Knox College, when opposing forces sought to frustrate his every effort to extend the College beyond mere denominational lines and to speak out against such crying evils of the time as slavery, for fear that some denominational toes might be trodden on, there was forged in the furnace of trying years, a determination to found a college that would stand unflinching for true Christian freedom, freedom from denominational ties, freedom to fight for righteous causes no matter how unpopular they might be that freedom wherewith Christ makes men free, a college that would stand unequivocally for Christ and His Kingdom. Because of that determination, Dr. Blanchard tells us that he refused the invitations of six different colleges to become their president, and accepted what seemed to

¹⁷⁸Wheaton Academy Bulletin 7, no. 7 (May 1954) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives.

be from any worldly standpoint, the least promising opportunity. It is that motto, the earnest conviction that makes it a clear statement of the purpose of the school, that makes Wheaton different. Surely it behooves every one of us to meditate often and long upon our college motto, until our determination becomes like the determination of the founder of the college, until we can make our own that high purpose, and do our work for Christ and His Kingdom....H. M.¹⁷⁹

Bechtel reports that “The motto appeared on the masthead of the first issue of the *Wheaton College Record* in 1890 and continued to be used in that way until 1906. The earliest use of the motto in the college catalog actually appears in the 1907 edition with the statement: “It is the effort of the trustees, Faculty, and friends of Wheaton College to make it stand firm and true ‘For Christ and His Kingdom.’ This is the college motto and the College is seeking to be faithful to it.”¹⁸⁰ This motto is engraved today on the entranceway to the college grounds, a 1941 class gift, and can be found engraved on Blanchard Hall in at least two cornerstones laid in 1890 and 1927.¹⁸¹

The Academy maintains the original motto but in the early 1990s under the leadership of then headmaster David Roth, it was transformed into a slightly altered phrase—*Soli Deo Gloria* or “All to the Glory of God”—that conveys much of the original meaning; this will be discussed more thoroughly in a later section of this paper.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 1.

¹⁸⁰Bechtel, *Wheaton College: A Heritage Remembered*, 98.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE INITIATION OF THE VISION:

THE ACADEMY FROM 1853 TO 1949

The purpose of this research is to ultimately understand how the founding principles embraced at the birth of an organization—in this case Wheaton Academy—can be sustained over time, despite the inevitable changes in leadership and the numerous distractions and barriers that can derail even the most committed amongst us. Robert Benne’s framework categories of vision, ethos, and people helps to organize a synthesized discussion of an overwhelming number of primary and secondary sources so that Wheaton Academy’s life story and organizational saga can begin to be parsed and lessons learned.

The years 1853 to 1949, nearly two thirds of its entire life span to date represent for this researcher the initiation of the vision in what amounts to the birth and childhood of this school and will be the focus on this first intercessory analysis. The birth of the Academy occurs because a small group of people in the town of Wheaton acted together to bring to life a school that would guarantee their children were raised to believe and act in accordance with their strongly held Christian tenets. While the building of the school was important, the more important “cathedral” they wished to build was a vision of social justice and a local means for bringing it to pass, since their personal experiences with eastern educational organizations were not satisfactory. Specifically, these Christian

pioneers were opposed to slavery, to secret societies and any mechanism which protects a privileged few to the detriment of others, and to a host of immoralities including drunkenness, dancing, card playing, and the like. Their commitment was fueled by their Christian beliefs and truisms about the way man should live in order to try to perfect this world to hasten the coming of their Lord.

It was a vision whose attributes match well against this researcher's synthesized framework for it is: 1) a compelling central vision that matters and engages one emotionally, socially, and intellectually; 2) an unsurpassable Christian vision addressing all the essential questions of life in regards to meaning, purpose and conduct; and 3) it is a distinctive vision that demands action. It is a vision of a choice to change the world for the better, to influence that outer environment, to make a more perfect world. It is a vision that will demand a type of leadership that matters and for many—one man in particular—it is leadership that carries its own source of intrinsic reward.

All the ingredients for drama, including the forces of good and evil, are present for the very first and perhaps most important ingredient of Wheaton's organizational saga and that is the story that has come to be known as the "grassy knoll" story that gives life to the vision. First documented in writing this researcher believes by Oscar Lumry thirty years after its occurrence, it serves to remind and inspire and convert all listeners to the magic of the vision, the pull of the struggle for good over evil on God's great stage. Though the story would not have been chronicled in writing yet, the ingredients of it are what attracted Jonathan Blanchard, a one in a million leader who was the exact right fit for this mission.

In reviewing the ingredients of this story birthed so long ago, Benne, Clarke, and Hargreaves undoubtedly would recognize the significance of the intersection of an “unsurpassable Christian vision”¹ at once so engaging to all “intellectually, socially, and emotionally” and that addressed issues of social justice with the emergence of a leader (Jonathan Blanchard) at just the right time who had the capability of unifying students, faculty, and his Board to act with conviction to work toward creating this more “perfect society.” To understand the identity of Wheaton Academy and the College today, one must start as has been done, with a detailed look at this individual. As was aptly summarized in *Fire on the Prairie*, “If an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a single man, then for Wheaton College [and its Academy], that man was Jonathan Blanchard.”² A man who dedicated himself to all that was “For Christ and His Kingdom.”

Jonathan had all the necessary attributes cited by Burton Clarke and Benne to play the lead role in building this cathedral “For Christ and his Kingdom.” He was charismatic in appearance and personality and had the verbal debating abilities to influence friends, fundraise when necessary, “persuade the unpersuadable” as to his positions on a host of moral evils, and protect the Academy/College from those who would destroy it. More importantly, he was in every way a perfect match for the job for their vision was truly one he had embraced throughout his life. In a sense, he had experiences out east and at Knox College where he had some trial runs at the building of this cathedral, learning in the

¹Benne, *Quality With Soul*, 6.

²Willard, *Fire on the Prairie*, 25.

process what would work and what would not with this new venture. He had experience with building alliances and knew the importance of getting the Board of Trustees membership configured to his advantage. Because of his experiences particularly at Knox College, he knew to keep Wheaton Academy/College away from denominational alliances that eventually would spiral into divisiveness threatening everything in its wake, even if it meant the lack of that denomination's financial support. He also knew, this researcher surmises that strategically it was important to get the Illinois Institute rechartered to become under the wing of more influential organization, a college, to give him the platform and mechanism for building his army ready to go to battle. He also knew and stated the importance of the location of the school at the crossroads of the nation. Perhaps the most important feature of Jonathan Blanchard was what also sometimes was his Achilles heel, his unshakable persistence to hold fast to the course ahead even when it would seem success was unlikely. He had the metaphorical fire in his belly that most found magnetic, though not all. In his own words retold by his son and later others in yet another historical story that becomes part of the Colleges' and the Academy's organizational saga, he intentionally chose to travel down the harder path at the fork in the woods so many years ago in Vermont. Is it any wonder that this larger than life leader, carrying the blood of puritan and pilgrim reformers in his veins, married a woman equally gifted, who gave birth to Charles Blanchard, one of the links in the chain of influence and succession Blanchard will build?

Charles, himself named for a freedom fighter and schooled as a youngster on a mixture of Lincoln debates, antislavery and anti-Masonic platforms, and a wagon ride

west to find gold to support the school, was every bit if not more effective than his father in building the cathedral. This researcher believes he was probably a better politician, able to lead less offensively, yet still firmly. Jonathan's bulldog force was needed to dig the cathedral basement out of a frozen ground, to allow Charles to more elegantly design and erect the frame upon which the walls would be hung. Both had alliances with important people—the Beechers, George Finney, Williston and Fischer, for example—who responded emotionally or financially to support the cause, and both were not shy about asking for assistance when need was there. Both had national and international platforms on which to make their case and both used them wisely, whether it was Jonathan pushing anti-slavery politics at home or in London, or Charles taking up the second of his father's causes—anti-masonry—which seemed more deeply rooted in the national psyche. Despite two different interpretations about the level of urgency to build a perfect society, it is hard to imagine that the Academy/College would have such a solid foundation were it not for the sixty-five years of the Blanchards. And although this research study's ultimate focus is on the Academy, to understand it deeply is to recognize its symbiotic relationship with its younger sibling, the College. Both were born with the same DNA, nurtured by nearly the same parents for their formative years, and imbued with the same value system. Only later when the cords were cut will it be interesting to discuss the resulting alignment. It is also important to note, however, that during this time period the College had four presidents, but the Academy had almost too many to count. The continuity of leadership at the college level, along with some of the statements of faith and conduct to which the Academy ascribed, helped to keep it upright,

but the turnover in leadership during this period of its life and in the next phase of life proved to be a deterrent to its health and growth in seeking its own identity and role in the overall organizational saga. The early *North Central Evaluation Report* signaled the need for the Academy to separate and to seek its own identity and thankfully Deans Straw, Rice, and Schell paid heed and worked to that end; without them, it might not have been an organization strong enough to relocate and survive in 1945.

Clarke and Benne both talk about the importance of people who will carry on with the vision once the initiation [and the initiator(s)] has passed. These people are in fact the other leaders and Board members, the teachers or senior faculty, the alumni, and the students. Both Clarke and Benne would agree that if commitment and alignment exist, the original vision will be carried forward and with each successive generation the organizational saga or story grows. These committed people will also fend off attacks and dismantle obstacles, so that a vision they did not necessarily start, but certainly now hold close to their hearts, can be brought to fruition; in some way it has become their own and as Clarke says they find themselves investing in the change, taking some credit for it, and making sure routines of the institution are stamped with it. They are part of the succession, the chain of influence.

The Blanchards—both of them—were skillful at building these chains of influence. Some of them happened naturally through marriage as in the Blanchard-Fischer dynasty. Some of it happened because of the careful recruiting and screening of teachers and faculty referenced by Charles as he talked about hiring only those teachers who professed to be Christians. The creation and nurturing of an Alumni association for

the Academy and the College was important in that it kept the vision fresh in graduates' hearts through celebration, news, and various events while building loyalty and trust in the progress of the school, a good thing when purse strings need to be loosened. The admittance of the children and the children's children to the college and academy literally and metaphorically supported the notion that the saga was continuing with new generations of players on this great stage. Certainly, too, the extended journeys both men made to keep speaking commitments across the nation and world kept the vision connected to a broader supportive audience who refueled the College and Academy at points with energy and other types of resources.

For organizational identity to be sustained, Benne indicates it needs more than just a good idea and some people who believe in it. It necessitates that belief becomes action, that all "walk their talk." This is ethos and it when it is present, the vision becomes three dimensional. In a Christian vision, Benne tells us, it can be seen in routines of worship, music, holidays, and liturgical commemorations. It is also that which helps to describe or codify our practices, what we believe and how we will live together particularly observable in rules, marriage practices, sexual behavior, dress, demeanor and other issues of our moral lives. Ethos also is evident in actions that show obedience to the vision, in this case to the Christian God who may call one to service or a particular religious vocation. It is evident in the actions that demonstrate a heeding of the call to moral action.

In the life of the Academy and the College, during these formative years of coexistence, there are some important events that speak to ethos. For both the Academy

and the College, there were requirements for daily chapel worship and Tuesday evening prayer opportunities, both important to maintain the communal and spiritual health of a body that believes in prayer and the importance of worship. The omnipresence in print, in word, and carved into cornerstones around the campus of the College and Academy motto—“For Christ and His Kingdom”—served as reminders of the vision and that all of their practices should be pointed to that end. The lack of fraternities and sororities or any other secret oath bearing organization, as well as the presence of the pledge to refrain from a host of identified ills, illuminate a lifestyle that was in alignment with the original founders’ vision.

Perhaps, though, the most important legacy Charles left to safeguard the integrity and alignment of both the Academy and the College to the unsurpassable Christian vision was his involvement in crafting and securing the affirmation of the *Statement of Faith*, a document that while perhaps not as needed in 1920, has proven over the years to circumscribe beliefs and practices more effectively than any denominational alliance. Its companion document sometimes referred to as the *Statement of Conduct*, begun informally much earlier or only formalized in the 1930s, performed the same function for each member’s social and moral actions. Having the documents would never have been enough, but the use of these documents to screen those who would be hired and enrolled, ensured that the “fit” was a good one, that the membership believed in, practiced, and “bought” the vision and were willing to embrace it in all aspects of their lives. A college also demonstrates its ethos through its distinctive programs and curriculum. In the case of this Christian Academy and College, it is a curriculum that is Bible-based and uses that

lens through which to view all of its other academic offerings and a set of extracurricular activities that enable and call students to serve others and build skills for religious vocations on the mission field. The College has named buildings and maintains hallways and showcases to honor individuals who have gone to the mission field to save lives for Christ.

If vision, people, and ethos are effectively developed, then the myriad obstacles and distractions that can derail an organization from sustaining its identity can be anticipated, confronted, and defeated. In Wheaton's case, it was not immune to potential disaster but was relatively well-equipped during this first stage of life to emerge victorious. There were several financial challenges, yet the Blanchards were not shy about personally asking for help from their allies to address the situation and were careful not to accept obligations that carried strings such as those a denomination might provide. It is interesting to note in what Clyde Kilby reveals in his 1944 study on the Academy with an eye to its future, that market forces probably caused the Academy to accept enrollment that it should not have entertained: older students, problem students rejected from the public school system, to name a few. This yielding of one's standard to economic forces hurt the Academy then and this research will reveal it was a lesson not learned until much later in its lifespan.

There were challenges to their anti-Masonic vision, but their political capital gained through national engagements on the topic as well as the strength, loyalty, and commitment of their "people" were enough to withstand even legal court battles. The danger of losing the vision to a modernist thought concerning principles of evolution and

the rise of rationalism was countered by policies and procedures for hiring, for enrollment that self-selected a population aligned with the Christian stance. Sometimes organizations overly depend on the first firebrand leader who when gone leaves the way ahead uncertain. The 65-year reign of the Blanchards, intermarriage with Fischers and other Board members, the enrollment of successive generations of students and the children of those students practically guaranteed the links necessary to carry forth the vision. It was a kind of distributed or shared leadership where all feel part of the saga.

The developing organizational saga of these fledging organizations actually seems to be the glue that connects and extends the understanding of identity and vision. We see evidence of the “grassy knoll” story everywhere from references made by College and Academy Presidents to the 1935 History written by Gudrun Thorlakson. It is a magical story that invites the reader in because the ending is not known, perhaps never will be known for though closer to a perfect society in some ways the battle goes on. As the Academy and its identity separate from the College as the next section of this research reveals, it will be interesting to determine to what extent the saga remains the same, whether only echoes of the first voices can be distinguished, or whether a new story emerges. Let the drama continue as Act II begins.

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION:

THE ACADEMY FROM 1950 TO 1988

One might argue that 1945, the date for moving the Academy to Prince Crossing Road, should mark the beginning of this second phase of its lifespan. This researcher would argue that the continuity of Dean Schell's administration which relocated with the school to its new location from 1945-1950 helped to bridge the two periods, leaving the true break to occur when his successor is named in 1950 and the Academy must begin to find its own way without the assistance of a college official.

Reverend Robert L. Gilbert, 1950

Replacing Dean Schell, Headmaster Robert L. Gilbert was at the helm of the Academy in 1950, a year that was marked by a renewed spiritual focus, beginning with an event that Academy alumni believed initiated The Great Revival of 1950.

The Great Revival, 1950

The February 20, 1950 issue of *Time Magazine* published an article entitled, "42 Hours of Repentance" which provided details of the famous Wheaton College Revival of 1950.¹ As was customary, each new semester began with Evangelism Week, "a time for special chapel services and speakers addressing students on a variety of spiritual topics. This particular night College President Edman walked to the microphone, and as he had

¹"42 Hours of Repentance," *Time Magazine*, February 20, 1950.

before many a time, he invited any student to come forward who wanted to give testimony to the Lord's blessings. After the first students finished speaking, 'a surge of confessional fervor swept through the auditorium' during which students poured out confessions of past sins and rededicated themselves to God."² As the hours passed, Pierce Chapel filled up and overflowed with more and more students and one day passed into another. During the second day, the speaker, Rev. Edwin Johnson of Seattle's First Mission Covenant Church, who had been waiting patiently to deliver his sermon scheduled for the first day, finally did so. At some point during the second day, reporters started appearing and occupied a section of the chapel to record the event. One student participant was quoted as saying: "God has touched us all...Of that senior class, (he went on to say) one-third of us became foreign missionaries. That's the only class in the history of the school with such a percentage. Other classes had one or two missionaries. We had one hundred. And I think that's a very telling fact."³

What was not reported in the *Time* magazine article is that many believe that the revival actually was seeded by an occurrence at Wheaton Academy that began at the end of January of 1950.⁴ Dr. Torrey Johnson, the first President of Youth for Christ, was invited to speak at Wheaton Academy and delivered a message which some saw as the catalyst for the College revival. College President Edman's wife regularly supported both the College and the Academy in prayer. She held a prayer meeting after which the

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Mel Johnson, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, January 21, 2011, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL.

mothers of the Academy sought out their children to whom they confessed their own (the mothers') imperfections. Academy students responded by confessing their own sins and recommitting themselves to the Lord and thereafter "took up the burden to pray for the College as it prepared for Evangelism Week in February." Wheaton College students who served as student counselors in the dorms were also said to be part of this revival at the Academy and took back this confessional spirit to Wheaton College. Eventually other Christian colleges and churches nationwide were also catalyzed by this spirit and the revival is said to have spread. The coverage of the revival was carried by *Time*, *Life*, national television and radio, and front page newspaper coverage. It seems appropriate then that the next part of the Academy physical campus to be affected had to do with the building of a place of worship.

Alumni Chapel Dedication, 1951

In 1951, due to an application made by Mr. Robert Van Kampen and Wheaton College President Edman, a World War II army chapel was purchased for \$500 and brought from Camp Ellis, Illinois to the Academy grounds. Alumni Foster Oury, President of the extremely successful Imperial Ready-Mix Concrete Company poured all the cement in the building, just as they had done for the LeTourneau gymnasium built a few years earlier. New additions to the structure included a basement, a new front veranda with steps and columns, and various mechanical improvements to allow it to be a multi-use facility, in addition to serving as the school's chapel. The Chapel Dedication Service occurred on June 8, 1951.⁵

⁵*Footprints* 4, Issue 9 (June 6, 1951), Wheaton College Academy student publication.

Cyril D. Garrett, 1952

Previously a Baptist minister in Michigan and before that a captain of an army freighter in the war, Cyril D. Garrett, came to Wheaton College in 1950 as a visiting instructor in education where he taught for two years. The next year he was appointed “the director of the Wheaton Academy preparatory school which is a department of Wheaton College.”⁶ In 1953 he took a leave of absence to complete his doctoral degree, after which he returned to the College to teach in the education department. In 1957, he was named head of that College department. Though he was not long at the Academy, he presided over a very important occasion in the life of the school, the centennial year.

The Centennial Celebration, 1953

One hundred years after the Academy’s birth was a time for reflection. Small details were noted such as the fact that the Chapel Youth Fellowship in 1953 had its roots in the Tuesday evening prayer meetings started nearly a hundred years ago. The Academy’s Centennial publication quoted a former student who in 1869 said: “And the Tuesday evening prayer meetings in the room above—with what affection and reverence do I look back on those sacred hours recognizing their hallowed influence.”⁷ A weathered copy of the Wheaton College alma mater written in 1953, found by this

⁶Mina G. Hill, “Cyril D. Garrett,” publicity news release (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College News Bureau, 1957).

⁷“*Centennial, 1853 to 1953*,” Brochure for Wheaton Academy’s Centennial Celebration (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy, 1953).

researcher in its current location, the Special Collections at the College archives, reinforces that this early sentiment was still in force.⁸

Praises to our alma mater, for her we will sing
 As a living testimony, unto Christ our King;
 We will fight for Wheaton's Honor, let her foes assail,
 Wheaton's colors grand and glorious, we will ever hail
 Spirit leading in his way, our lives for Him will ring.

Headmaster Cyril Garrett oversaw the Academy during its centennial year and took the occasion to speak of larger issues no doubt influenced by world events. His words resonated with vision for what lay ahead as challenges for the Academy during an era of worldwide change:

We, the young people of today live in one of the most challenging periods of all history. Scientists have called it the beginning of the Atomic Age. A new and daring form of expression has taken over the minds of the geniuses of the arts. America is assuming a more challenging position of world leadership and authority than she has ever before experienced. Nations of the world are taking sides to prepare for a conflict which may emerge at any time as World War III... We at Wheaton Academy believe that we have the answer to this challenge. Our slogan, "for Christ and His Kingdom" states simply but truly our reason for existence. In other words we believe that Christ is the answer. Now as we embark upon the next one hundred years, we are sobered by the thought that we, like America, hold a unique position in the world. The next one hundred years may be cut short at any time by the coming of the very King in glory. Ours is the serious challenge of taking to the ends of the earth the good news of Christ and His kingdom."⁹

⁸"Wheaton College Alma Mater" (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, 1953).

⁹"*Centennial, 1853 to 1953*," Brochure for Wheaton Academy's Centennial Celebration (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy, 1953).

One of the ways in which the Academy took the good news of Christ “to the ends of the earth” was through its support of missions on the foreign field. Just a few years beyond the tenure of Garrett when the class of 1958 would graduate, it was noted in “Academy News” that of the “63 seniors, 1/3 of them come from homes of pastors or missionaries. Ten of them have parents who graduated from either the Academy or College. Two-thirds are planning on continuing their education, half of them at Wheaton College. 1/3 of the class anticipates the mission field or pastorate. Next largest area is teaching.”¹⁰ The writer echoed words used again and again throughout the school’s history: “Looking at their past and present it is evident that they have great potential—a potential which can be realized as they hold in their hearts the motto which they have come to know so well—“For Christ and His Kingdom.”¹¹

One of the changes in curriculum for boys that Garrett pointed to was the development of radio theory and operation for as he said, “This is a real advantage to those who must go into the armed services as well as an opportunity for gaining a good background for the use of radio in Christian service. Our own amateur station W9YBG affords practice experience in this field.”¹² The Academy radio station was also a direct communication link to some of the students’ parents whose lives were spent in ministry abroad as well as countless alumni of the Academy and the College; it probably also

¹⁰*Academy News* 1, No. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives. June 1958).

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

served to keep alive in students' minds the call of the mission field which seemed much more real and close at hand through this communication link.

Garrett's challenge issued to the current students and the Academy community at large was based on his understanding of the founding principles so often retold in this organizational saga which he took care to delineate in the December 1953 *Bulletin of Wheaton College*.¹³

As one reviews Wheaton Academy's past century of service, he is impressed with the contrast between that humble beginning and the present facilities. Under the blessing of God, that past century has been characterized by progress and achievement. Around the purpose to which those early Illinois Settlers dedicated Illinois Institute in 1853, has grown a modern high school program, dedicated to training young people "For Christ and His kingdom." As one thanks God for sustaining this work over the century, he is made conscious that the Academy has stood because it was built on the ROCK. Those pioneers laid "no other foundation" when they knelt in the prairie grass and dedicated 'the hill and all that shall be upon it to that God in Whom trusting they had gone into the thickest of the fight, not only for the freedom of human bodies, but for human souls as well.' What does the future hold for a school with such a memorable heritage? The answer to that question depends largely on two things: 1. God's continued blessings. Considering what God has invested in these young lives, we feel confident of HIS favor. 2. Our willingness to continue in the spirit of sacrifice that has made the Academy possible. So, in a large measure the Academy's future depends on its friends.

Never were truer words spoken and though Garrett would not be the first, nor the last to point to this factor, he did use the celebratory nature of the Centennial to gather those who held it dear, so its needs could be made known through donations and both financial and spiritual support. He identified in his next words that the Academy had need of \$25,000 to cover operational expenses, and he presented an itemized list of items they

¹³*Bulletin of Wheaton College Academy* 30, No. 9 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Academy, December, 1953).

would be glad to receive as donations including typewriters and the like. He next referenced a year's calendar of "Coming Centennial Events," announcing first that December 13 would be a "rededication service of the Academy to God for the second century," December 15 a Centennial birthday dinner for friends of the Academy who would be interested in making pledge donations, February 8-12 would feature Centennial Evangelistic Services involving the participation of about twenty-five missionary personnel, likely to include many who had ties to the Academy either because their children attended the school or they themselves were alumni, and February 15 Dedication of the Wheaton Academy Letourneau built and opened just a few years before.¹⁴

Letter to President Edman About Teacher Turnover, 1953

Although all energies seemed to have been publicly focused on centennial commemorations and the next 100 years of promise, a few months prior to these celebrations, on August 16, 1953, a letter was written, presumably by then Cyril Garret about some of his concerns regarding the turnover rate of Academy teachers. As noted earlier, while the college enjoyed unusual stability in its leadership with College President Edman being only the fourth President in nearly 100 years of history, the Academy was not so fortunate. Even while inhabiting Schell Hall on the Wheaton College campus, it was rare for the school to have a director or Head that lasted more than a year or two with the exception of Deans Rice, Straw, and Schell. When in close proximity to the College's watchful eye, this was not as problematic, for the school was under the control of College officials and functioned as any other "on campus"

¹⁴Ibid.

department. The problem of turnover, however, became more of an issue once the school had moved to Prince Crossing Road. Turnover was not just experienced in the leadership of the school but was especially felt in the teaching staff as is detailed in this letter by Garret, himself a short-timer in his role:

I am reporting to you a little study I have made on Academy personnel since the move to Prince Crossing in 1945-46. This has proven very interesting and I trust it will help us to understand some of the problems the Academy faces in the future. A school such as Wheaton Academy needs teachers to have longevity of employment. That is one essential to the development of "school spirit," something very lacking at the Academy, among teachers as well as students. In looking over this chart, I am able to spot tremendous teacher potential that has left Wheaton Academy. Why they left I am unable to say. Up to the beginning of the 1953-54 school year, the following figures represent the heavy turnover of Academy personnel.

11 admin have served for an average of 2.1 years

52 teachers have served for average of 2.03 yrs

15 music teachers have served for an average of 1.6 yrs

9 dorm supervisors have served for an average of 1.8 yrs.

At the beginning of 53-54 school year we will have only four faculty members and one person in office personnel who have been with the Academy for as long as five years. We are expecting to add 8 new persons to our faculty for next year. As we think about the future...I am wondering what suggestions you and the Board would have for retaining more of our teachers until they develop into first-rate instructors? The resolution passed by the Board last June is a big step, I think, for some of our finest teachers have expressed concern over students being able to criticize teachers, parents taking the remarks to trustees, and action being taken with the teacher being questioned. I also feel that some standard whereby Academy teachers could attain tenure would do much to keep some very fine teachers. Some definite salary scale (comparable to the one considered for the college faculty) instead of an individual bargaining basis would be encouraging. One of the first tasks the Academy Board asked me to do was to suggest a salary schedule. After much study I made

such a recommendation, and our Board adopted it for presentation to the Finance committee, I have had no report on it since.¹⁵

He then advocated for the Trustees to “adopt the policies of the North Central Association for its pattern of dealing with teachers and administrators.”¹⁶ He complained about the lack of a process for letting teachers go or reviewing those decisions. He suggested a form such as The Ohio Teaching Record, an anecdotal observation form whereby visitors in a class can objectively rate a teacher.

It is only because of my zeal for such a faculty at the Academy that I have the temerity to suggest the above points. They are not offered critically, just hopefully that we may do something to keep our good people here, serving the Lord. I am sending with this note the North Central Bulletin, containing policies, criteria, and regulations of the NCA, The Ohio Teaching record, and the chart from which I figured the data of personnel turnover.¹⁷

Many of these concerns brought to the attention of the College president were foreshadowing problems that would grow and continue unabated for years to come. Cyril Garrett left just two years later in 1955, another example of the turnover to which he referred.

Mel Johnson, 1955

Melvin E. Johnson was appointed as Director of Wheaton Academy in 1955 to succeed Cyril Garrett. Graduating from Wheaton College with a B.S. degree in biology in June of 1948, he began working at the Academy as a biology teacher and supervisor of

¹⁵“Dear Dr Edman,” unsigned letter to President Edman (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, August 16, 1953).

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

the boy's dormitory in the fall of 1948, three years after the move had been made to Prince Crossing Road. He continued in that role until June of 1951 when he married Academy teacher Joyce Giles. He and his wife both taught at the Academy at that time and were the favorite teachers of many at the school. To the surprise and joy of many at the junior-senior banquet, he announced to the students that they were engaged. The banquet had an oriental theme and included the use of ginkgo trees, so in honor of their engagement, a ginkgo tree was planted near the new Chapel.¹⁸

For the next four years he continued teaching biology and Bible, served one year as the boys' counselor, and completed a master's degree in counseling from Northwestern University by June of 1953, including a few courses in general administration. Halfway through the 1955 school year, Johnson was appointed Acting Director to allow Garrett to complete his graduate work. Johnson was appointed the Director when Garrett left to teach in the Department of Education at the College.¹⁹ It was a position that he did not seek out as his first love was teaching students in the classroom, but he agreed to assist the administration by filling this position.²⁰ He shared with this researcher that he had first been recruited at Wheaton College to teach biology at the Academy by Dean Schell. Johnson told me:

¹⁸Mr. Mel Johnson, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 21, 2011.

¹⁹"Mel Johnson," press release from National Association of Evangelicals (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collection, 1955).

²⁰Mr. Mel Johnson, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 21, 2011.

I'd never been out there at the Academy. I just wasn't interested at the time but he (Dean Schell) insisted that I come out and so I did. I really liked the idea of it in the end. He convinced me what an opportunity I would have living with the boys. He said, 'You'll have a real opportunity there in working with the young men. You'll be a very important person in their lives.' And so I did.²¹

While Johnson is remembered for his focus on his students and the development of the extracurricular program, it was during his tenure that in the fall of 1958, that the Academy's departmental relationship with the college ended as this former preparatory school with a population of 250 students became an independent institution with its own charter and its own Board of Trustees.

Emancipation from the College, 1958

A *Chicago Tribune* article published on July 10, 1958 and referenced in a Brethren newsletter provides a record of some of the details of this transaction in which the 104 year old school was sold "to a group of Christian businessmen [three of whom were] affiliated with the assembly meeting at Bethany Chapel in Wheaton."²² These new owners who made application for a not-for-profit corporation charter under the laws of Illinois to facilitate this purchase included: William G. McCartney, President of the Stewards Foundation of Chicago, and Donald M. Taylor, its Vice President and General Manager. McCartney worked for a furniture dealing firm, Bradshaw and McCartney of Chicago. Others included Robert W. Mojonnier, District Sales Manager of Mojonnier Brothers Co, Chicago food equipment manufacturers, and Eric M. Hanson of the First

²¹Ibid.

²²"Letters of Interest," August-September, 1958 issue (Wheaton, IL: Plymouth Brethren, 1958), 12-13.

National Bank of Chicago.²³ Current Head of School Gene Frost shed some additional light on The Stewards Foundation in his interview with this researcher:²⁴

The Stewards Foundation was connected to the brethren, the Plymouth Brethren. The Plymouth Brethren don't have a typical denominational structure, but they have this foundation where you could give money to support Brethren Churches or Brethren causes. It's a very unique thing. The Brethren Church is another whole fascinating study in that they were the fastest growing group of churches in the 1950s. You didn't need a pastor and you could just start an Assembly in your home. It was almost the Willow Creek of the 50s because they had modern music and such. It was the first wave of not doing a traditional church in a traditional building with a traditional pastor. It caught on like wildfire but soon elements of it became institutionalized. After 50 years, they're still singing those songs. The problem, in my opinion, was and is that since they don't have a clergy, they could never really get organized efficiently to be effective in the long run. It really has kind of diminished into just small assemblies here and there that are left over. One of my good friends and his family were members of a local Assembly and his dad is one who signed that charter.²⁵

Speaking for his partners, Taylor declared that “while realizing the grave responsibility of helping to develop 250 active young minds in their most formative years, we accept gladly the challenge of Wheaton Academy. We aim to continue to improve its curriculum and its facilities, and to uphold its honorable Christian tradition of more than 100 years. We could sum it up by saying that we want young people at Wheaton Academy to become better acquainted with God and His plan for their lives.”²⁶ McCartney, Mojonier, and Taylor planned to serve as the first directors of this newly

²³*The Daily Journal* (DuPage County, IL), “Wheaton Academy Sold,” June 27, 1958, Front page.

²⁴Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶*The Daily Journal* (DuPage County, IL), “Wheaton Academy Sold,” June 27, 1958, Front page.

purchased Academy with the intent of searching “for other capable Christian businessmen with a keen interest in Christian education and young people, to serve as trustees.”²⁷ There were no plans for changing the director Melvin E. Johnson, a graduate of Wheaton College, nor faculty or staff for the coming school year of 1958-59. Edmund R. Powell, also of Bethany Chapel was appointed as business manager.²⁸ The purchase contract called “for a total purchase price of \$250,000, and the current annual budget, which [was] met only in part from tuition, border[ed] on another quarter million.”²⁹ This group of Christian businessmen believed that two factors enabled them to envision success: 1) “the college had agreed to reasonable terms of payment over a period of years.” and 2) the Academy’s continuation, growth, and development were in the Lord’s hands.”³⁰ Wheaton Academy corporation clearly stated in its new articles of corporation that its purpose was to: “continue to provide Bible-centered coeducational instruction and training above the elementary school level, designed to impart a knowledge of God and of His universe and to fit the students to cope with life in this world, for the glory of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³¹ This new corporation also pledged to uphold the purposes of the Academy through the following well-defined objectives: “1)To offer to the student a liberal high school education in which is emphasized the Christian theistic

²⁷“Letters of Interest,” August-September, 1958 issue (Wheaton, IL: Plymouth Brethren, 1958), 12-13.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

view of the world of man, and of his culture in the light of Biblical and natural revelation; 2) To give every student an opportunity to study under competent instructors who believe the Book of Books to be absolutely valid in its content and teaching and who stress the claims of Christ as Savior and Lord and the effective work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer; 3) To train the student in understanding and evaluating the thoughts of others and in expressing his own thoughts clearly and effectively; 4) To provide a basis for preparation for a student's chosen profession or vocation; 5) To help the student to form habits of Christian citizenship which will enable him to participate constructively in the life of the community; 6) To assist the student in developing physical well-being and a wholesome Christian personality through participation in devotional, social, and recreational activities.”³²

Then Wheaton College President Dr. V. Raymond Edman remarked, “This arrangement seems mutually advantageous...it will give the academy independent supervision, by a separate, governing Board with the responsibility of future academy expansion to meet increasing demands for student admission...At the same time, [this arrangement] will enable the college to devote more attention to strengthening both the collegiate undergraduate program and the Graduate school of theology and Christian education.”³³ Thus, starting September 1, 1958, Wheaton Academy became a separate institute, retaining the name of Wheaton Academy, but entirely separate both from a legal and management standpoint, from its parent organization, Wheaton College.

³²Ibid.

³³*The Daily Journal* (DuPage County, IL), “Wheaton Academy Sold,” June 27, 1958, Front page.

Four months later, the *Chicago Tribune* from January 22, 1959 provided a progress report in a brief news story revealing that this “first year of independence [brought] announcements of building improvement plans and the minimizing of administrative red tape.”³⁴ Director Melvin Johnson talked about plans to build a separate dormitory for girls, general remodeling and enlargement of classrooms to allow the school to grow from 250 students to 500. He pointed to the addition of art laboratory classes, home economics, and cooking classes that were slated to be added back into the curriculum. “Everyone is quite enthusiastic about their emancipation, with a greater feeling of personal interest by teachers,” Johnson reported. Prior to the purchase Johnson indicated teacher turnover had “run as high as 48 percent one year.”³⁵ He indicated that the Academy was working on new teacher salary contracts which would guarantee better wages and promotion securities for this faculty of 20. In some ways this good news was too good to be true.

A communication carried in *The Wheaton Academy Bulletin* in December of 1958 spoke to identity issues relative to this change:

As a department of Wheaton College, the Academy had no hope of an independent identity. The very prestige of the college handicapped it. Too few knew of its existence, let alone its history. And its proposals for development, improvement, and expansion had often to bow to the pressing needs of other departments. That bothered the Academy to no end. And it did the college, too. Junior out at Prince Crossing was forever wanting this and that and, from the College viewpoint, was a continual expense with no prospect of its ever earning its own living. So the Academy itched for freedom and the College was not adverse to turning it

³⁴*Chicago Tribune*, “Wheaton Prep School Takes New Strides,” January 22, 1959, Part 5, Page 8.

³⁵*Ibid.*

loose. It was not an essential department of the College. And independent, it would continue to feed into the College well trained freshmen of excellent character. Then this summer the College found some men who were willing to buy independence for the Academy—men in whom the College had confidence, who would form the nucleus for a new trusteeship. And now Wheaton Academy is at last –at long last—on its own. Now comes responsibility. No more papa to meet the budget. On the other hand, no more papa to say, “no.” Never—absolutely never—in all of its long (105 year long) history has the Academy faced such a challenge as it does today...at last Wheaton Academy is free to act its age and give rein to its perpetual youth.”³⁶

Back Home Again, 1961

Like a young adult who often must return for a time to live at home again after initial plans of independence go belly up, the newly incorporated Academy found itself similarly unable to exist without assistance and returned under the protection of the College who resumed ownership in 1961. Excerpt entitled “New Responsibility” from the back cover of the *Wheaton Academy Bulletin* in January of 1961, Volume 3, No. 1 provided some indication that the group of businessmen who had purchased and reincorporated the Academy in 1958 were not able to meet the financial challenge of such a venture. The article stated:

The following announcement was recently released by Mr. Herman A. Fischer [descendant of Jonathan Blanchard’s longtime friend], chairman of the Wheaton College Board of Trustees after a period of negotiation with the Academy Trustees: ‘Wheaton College has assumed the responsibility for the continued operation of the Wheaton Academy. Title to the Wheaton Academy property has remained under Wheaton College over the last two and one half years subject to fulfillment of certain conditions agreed upon by the Academy trustees. The Academy trustees were depending upon the backing of the Stewards’ Foundation for the meeting of these conditions. Certain difficulties, not connected with the Academy, have caused the Stewards’ Foundation to limit any future

³⁶*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 1, no.1 (December, 1958) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives), 1958.

commitments; consequently, arrangements have been completed under which Wheaton College has become directly responsible for the operation of the Wheaton Academy. Plans are now being completed that will enable the Academy to continue its self-contained operation, with its own Board, under the guidance of Wheaton College.

‘The future of the Wheaton Academy as it is viewed in light of this latest development is unlimited,’ stated Wendell P. Loveless Jr., the new director of the Academy. ‘This bright future depends, however, upon the friends of Wheaton Academy and on the extent of their willingness to support this ministry and to help us face the problems of secondary Christian education.’³⁷

Wendell Lovelace, 1960

In addition to weathering this transition back under the protection of the College, Lovelace’s tenure included other changes. The Aurora and Elgin train line had ceased operation in 1959, just prior to his tenure. This convenient mode of transportation had allowed students to easily commute to the campus from communities outside of West Chicago. As a result, the Academy started its own bus service, running four buses to ferry students to and from campus. One of the buses in particular—Bus Number One—was driven by Eugene LeMaire, a biology teacher at the Academy who made a deal with his riders that if they could be ready 45 minutes earlier one day a month, he would drive them first to Olde North Pancake House for breakfast.³⁸ A fond memory for many alumni.

³⁷“New Responsibility,” *Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (January 1961) (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1961), back cover.

³⁸“Our Heritage, A Story of Growth and Change,” brochure (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Christian High School, 1985).

Reemphasizing Behaviors and Practices, 1960

Also during Loveless' tenure, in the *Wheaton Academy Bulletin* of 1960-61, the behaviors and practices—or ethos—of those associated with the Academy was once again clearly delineated and continued what was begun by its founding families:

Wheaton Academy means a way of Living. While we do not minimize the importance of the responsibility of the individual, we recognize that, of necessity, we must also have a group testimony. In order to insure some measure of aggregate testimony, we request that faculty, staff, and students agree to abstain from certain practices: the use of alcoholic liquors and tobacco, gambling and possession and use of playing cards, dancing, attendance at secret societies and attendance at theaters, including the movies. Although recognizing that others may regard these restrictions as arbitrary and realizing that such abstinence will not of itself produce Christian conduct, we believe these requirements to be consistent with our state standards and ideals. In addition we stress the importance of obeying God's moral law and living wholesome lives.³⁹

Another brochure that provided a profile of Wheaton from 1959-1962, also spoke to the importance of a school whose teachings could help to stem the tide of moral decay.

The brochure, in language that even Jonathan Blanchard would approve of, stated:

The whole atmosphere of the newspaper front page reminds one of the acute urgency of the hour. Man's failure to advance as rapidly morally as he has scientifically threatens to make a shambles of civilization as we know it. Communism is on the march and is gobbling up the earth's real estate at the rate of 50 square miles an hour. This anti-Christ movement has succeeded in enslaving one billion of the world's total population. Yes, we are living in dangerous, critical days which cry out for Christian leadership. But if the leaders of tomorrow are to make their lives count for Christ, they must receive thorough training while they are still in their formative years. ..this can be done only as the Lord's people join hands with us to educate a Christian leadership for the sixties which will help

³⁹*Wheaton Academy Bulletin*, 1960-61 (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1960-61), 18.

reverse the gains of materialism and which will make a world-wide spiritual impact for the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

John Blanchard was a man intent on this mission and, coincidentally, was a descendant of Jonathan Blanchard, the school's first reform minded individual.

John Blanchard, 1962

John Blanchard was known to many as a man who gave fifty years of his life to the Christian school movement. Though his primary service was tied to the National Association of Christian Schools, he did serve as the Academy's Director for three years, from 1962-1965. John Blanchard, grandson of Charles A. Blanchard and great grandson of Jonathan, assumed leadership in the fall of 1962. In a letter written much later on October 21, 1996, he informed then Headmaster David Roth that his mother was the daughter of Charles A. Blanchard and while her marriage was coincidentally to a man named John Blanchard, it was from a different ancestral part of the family tree. The two Blanchard families intersected back in 1639 through a Thomas Blanchard of Boston. Blanchard's perspective on the importance of the Academy and its relationship to the College was reflected in this letter as he related that he was told that in 1910-1915, the Academy was the largest department in the College. He emphasized that the Academy was "an essential partner for the fulfillment of Jonathan Blanchard's vision" just as "today [i.e., 1996 when he was writing the letter] the Academy is an essential partner for families that are committed to giving their children a high school education that will

⁴⁰“*Wheaton Academy Profile, 1959-1962*, flyer (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1962).

nurture a vision of what it means to “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ.”⁴¹

Despite the acknowledgement of its importance, Blanchard served as director during a time when each year, from 1963 on, the college decreased its financial support, signaling their desire to focus on their main mission which was developing Wheaton College. The words of Dr. Kilby in his 1944 study of the Academy indicated years before his conviction that “nothing should be allowed to interfere with the building of the best possible liberal arts Christian college.”⁴² And it would appear that the college, weighted down by the financial drain of the Academy, was starting to take those words to heart. In a letter to Academy Board Chair Don Adams, Blanchard penned decades later at a time when he was not able to attend a 1995 Academy recognition ceremony, he wrote:

“I was very much aware that I was following in the footsteps of Dr. Charles A. Blanchard, my grandfather, who held that position in 1870. In my own mind, my special service to the Academy was to suggest that it would be in the best interests of both the College and the Academy that there should be a separation. In my mind tradition alone was not enough to justify the perpetuation of the relationship. The men who really engineered the transition were Ken Hansen, Jim Barnes, and Chuck Strobeck. I also remember the work of Bob Mojonier, Martin Siml, Roy Clansky, Dr. Ken Geiser, and Bernie VanderMolen. My original commitment was to secondary education and I still believe that we must win our young people to Christ before they get to their college years... The Academy years were part of the Lord’s seasoning for me.”⁴³

⁴¹John Blanchard to David Roth, October 21, 1996, letter, West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives.

⁴²Clyde S. Kilby, “Study of the Wheaton College Academy” (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collections, May, 1945).

⁴³John Blanchard to Don Adams, April 20, 1995, letter, West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives.

Though he left the position of Headmaster at the end of August in 1965 to dedicate himself fulltime to serving as Executive Director of the National Association of Christian Schools, a position he had held since 1961, he still remained a member of the Board of Trustees of the Academy.⁴⁴ His decision to leave was delivered to the Board on December 3, 1964, two months after a separate Board was established to direct the operations of Wheaton Academy. It was a mutual decision as the press release indicated that:

Immediately following its appointment, your new Board of Trustees began developing a detailed, long-range growth program. As major plans and time tables were established, it became apparent to Mr. Blanchard and the other members of the Board of Trustees that a full-time Headmaster was needed to move the program forward as rapidly as possible. After prayerful consideration of the matter, Mr. Blanchard advised the Board that he felt led to accept full-time responsibilities as Executive Director of NACS rather than assume full-time responsibilities as Headmaster of Wheaton Academy”⁴⁵

Separate Academy Board Established by College, 1964

The development of this separate Academy Board was communicated to the wider Academy community in the November 1964 *Wheaton Academy Bulletin*:

The Board of Wheaton College recently established a separate Board to direct the operation of Wheaton Academy, which has long been a department of the College.⁴⁶

⁴⁴“Wheaton Academy Announces Second Step in Long Range Growth Program,” Press release, February, 1965 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collection, 1965).

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 5, no. 4 (November 1964) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1964).

While this move was certainly enacted to dedicate attention to the high school as one press release stated “in recognition of the growing importance of Christian secondary education,”⁴⁷ it seems also probable that the goals of the long range plans were to help the Academy become financially self-sufficient even as it looked to grow programs and mission. On this twelve-man Board, four would also be trustees of the College to ensure communication between both administrations. The goal of the new Board was to engage in long-range planning for the Academy, focused on their unique secondary school problems with an eye to establishing a sound academic and financial program to guarantee its future success. “As in the past, the property of the Academy is owned by the College and is leased by the College Trustees to the Academy Trustees.”⁴⁸ Five of the twelve comprised the roster of an Executive Committee who met monthly to investigate every aspect of the Academy operation. They were charged with reviewing the physical plant, faculty qualifications and compensation, curricular practices, and dormitory and dining hall facilities in order to draft a long-range plan for the development of the Academy to share in the spring of 1965. A large concern was the charge to “stimulate financial support directly to the Academy” which was a legally incorporated non-profit corporation and qualified to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions. The Executive committee was comprised of James H. Barnes, Jr., Chairman; Dr. Kenneth S. Kantzer, Vice Chairman; Roy W. Clansky, Jr.; Robert L. Schallenberg; and John F. Blanchard, Jr., Director of the Academy. The rest of the full Board included: Norris

⁴⁷“Wheaton Academy Announces Second Step in Long Range Growth Program,” Press release, February, 1965 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collection, 1965).

⁴⁸*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 5, no. 4 (November 1964) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1964).

Aldeen, Dr. P. Kenneth Gieser, Taylor D. Ferguson, Robert C. Van Kampen, Kenneth N. Hansen, and Robert W. Mojonnier. Mojonnier was secretary of the Stewards Foundation of Chicago and served on the Interim Academy Board from 1958 to 1960 when it was operated by the Stewards Foundation.⁴⁹

If the first step in a long-range growth program was establishing a separate Board dedicated to that focused operation, then the second step, especially given Blanchard's resignation, was to identify a new full-time Headmaster which they did through the appointment of James A. Fenton after what the press release cites as an "exhaustive search by the Board of Trustees for a man who wishes to devote his entire life to Christian secondary schools and who has the necessary depth of experience and training to operate as Headmaster of a school involving both boarding and commuting students."⁵⁰

James Fenton, 1965

James Fenton, a 1943 graduate of Houghton College with an undergraduate degree in economics and sociology, earned his master's from the University of Rochester. He also served in the marines in World War II and attained the rank of captain. Before coming to the Academy, he had spent the majority of his time at teaching and coaching at Stony Brook School on Long Island. He also had been involved for nearly twenty years in administrative capacities including the directorship of Deerfoot Lodge, a Christian

⁴⁹"Wheaton Academy Announces Second Step in Long Range Growth Program," Press release, February, 1965 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collection, 1965).

⁵⁰Ibid.

camp for boys in New York State. His appointment as Headmaster of Wheaton Academy in his words, “represented the attainment of a God-given, life-time goal.”⁵¹

One of Fenton’s first communications was captured in November of 1965 in the *Wheaton Academy Bulletin* when he identified that “we stand at a crossroad in Academy history today. We have but to look about us to recognize the need for our kind of school manned by our kind of people. Since its beginning people have for this cause bowed their knees.”⁵² He informed the readers that the goal of the Trustees was to improve the leadership team and the facilities in order to be competitive and meet standards, but that especially in case of a building program, if it is “begun through heavy debt encumbrance [this] would jeopardize future building programs and limit the effectiveness of the Lord’s work. The solution lies in effectual fervent prayer and faith that Christians will give and that long range pledges will enable us to project a campaign to supply the needs of Wheaton Academy.”⁵³

Gil Dodds

The Board of Trustees took their third step in the long range growth plan by announcing the appointment of Mr. Gilbert L. Dodds, as full time Director of Studies and Guidance effective September 1, 1965. Dodds was well known in athletics as the “Flying Parson” and “King of the Miler’s” by coaches and sportswriters across the country for his

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²*Wheaton Academy Bulletin* 5, no. 8 (1965) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1965).

⁵³Ibid.

world records set for the Indoor Mile which he held for eleven years.⁵⁴ His talents extended far beyond the track, however, for his credentials were many with degrees from Ashland College, Gordon Seminary, Wheaton College, and Northwestern University. He had also completed some graduate work at Harvard University, Michigan State University and Northern Baptist Seminary. Prior to this position at the Academy he was serving as the registrar at Huntington College in Huntington, Indiana. Before Huntington he had been a full time counselor for four years at Naperville Central High School and had taught physical education at Wheaton College for fourteen years. This new position saw him embarking on working with each teacher and department at the Academy to review and revise the curriculum, bringing forward recommendations for class organizations, course offerings, and graduation requirement suggestions in order to “develop a more challenging Christ centered curriculum.” They established some minimum requirements for graduation including a unit of Bible, four units of English, two units of Mathematics, two units of Science, two units of History, one unit of physical education, and six elective units for a total of 18 units of credit. Even with this progress being made there were still mounting concerns about the financial health of the Academy.

Wheaton College’s Increasing Concerns

A file located in the Academy archives of written communication between key decision makers from the College and the Academy, spanning a time period from October 6, 1967 to January 1, 1969 reveals the increasing concerns on the part of the College about the financial wisdom of continuing to operate the Academy and a lack of

⁵⁴“Wheaton Academy Announces Third Step in Long Range Growth Program,” Press release. September, 1965 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College Archives and Special Collection, 1965).

certainty about the current administrator's ability (Jim Fenton) to fix a growing list of problems. On a side note, though certainly not his chief responsibility, and more symbolic than anything else in regards to concerns about leadership deficiencies, 1967 is the only year in the Academy's long history during which a yearbook was not able to be issued due to the loss of 31 pages due either to the incompetence of some member of staff or the printer losing the pages. Refunds were issued and apologies sent to students and families but to this day, it is an anecdote pointed to by current leadership when referring to "the dark ages"⁵⁵

Interestingly, the first letter in the aforementioned file is a response from newly installed College president Hudson T. Armerding to the condolences sent from Mr. Robert W. Mojonier of the Stewards Foundation, and Chairman of the Academy Board of Trustees, on the occasion of the sudden passing of former College president Edman. It is interesting to this researcher because the College was obviously in transition as one President replaced another and Wheaton College, coupled with the fact that along with every other college and university in the late 60s, is trying to find its way through a volatile period of social and political unrest in this country. Could this context have escalated their need to focus on their own collegiate agendas? It certainly must be viewed as a distinct possibility. Current Head of School, Gene Frost shared his thoughts on this time period in the life of the College when questioned about the development of its mission of social justice over time:

⁵⁵"Wheaton College Board of Trustee Minutes," January 19, 1970 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 1970).

You know, I think the Evangelical Church was somewhat on the defensive in the '50s and '60s, trying to hold on in the face of the liberal onslaught. And social justice was all about liberalism and abandonment of the gospel [in their minds during that time period]. I know my parents grew up that way. So if we can't do that— we're going to hold onto the gospel truth. We don't have time to, you know, save those drowning people socially. And I also think the campuses exploded in the '60s. Wheaton College certainly did. It probably led to one of the reasons for their wanting to close the high school because the campus blew up. In '69, Wheaton College had 600 kids vote for an agnostic student body president. Prior to the late '60s at Wheaton College, I believe that the College focused on intellect in their admissions. They assumed all Christian kids were the same. They all came from good Christian homes. They all did the 1950s thing. They all wore coat and ties to dinner. At Wheaton College right up to the mid-'60s, you wore a coat and tie to dinner at night. And it was a very compliant place. And all they cared about was getting the most intellectually bright students, and that was what they picked. Well, when the campuses exploded in the 1967-69, the college was totally shocked. I mean, my brother-in-law graduated in '69 and of his eight closest friends in the Philosophy Department, he's the only Christian, Evangelical Christian, left that I know of. When the doubts and the questions of the '60s came, these kids went the way of all the other kids in the '60s. So then the admissions policy totally changed instead of intellectual gifts being ranked number one, the spiritual became number one....And the character of the student body changed because up until that point it was just, "Let's get the best SAT scores in," and they got burned. And so then after that is when the Hunger Project took off; that's when SMP (student missionary project) was started and you know, a lot of the student missions took off. There was a revitalization of the Evangelical mission of Wheaton College, which is an interesting study all by itself. But anyway, so Wheaton Academy reflected that, both schools going through the tumultuous '60s and Wheaton Academy was accepting anybody just to pay the bills. And so we did not have a clear vision – the teachers came and went, the students came and went. That's the 20 years where we struggled.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

It is important to keep in mind this historical background when reviewing what follows—in chronological order, a series of excerpts and explanations to capture the flavor of this year and a half communication.

*October 24, 1967: Jim Fenton to Herman Fischer*⁵⁷

Headmaster Fenton sends thanks for the recent golf trip and informs him that he is just back from Detroit and St. Louis in an effort to find funding. He also mentioned his upcoming trip to Central and South America on behalf of the Central American Mission and Wheaton Academy. This letter seeks to assure Fischer that fiscal responsibility is the Academy's first concern and there is no intent to consider the construction of buildings until they acquire the stature expected by the Christian community, provide preventative maintenance to existing structures, and they can be viewed as a "growing concern."

*February 23, 1968: Robert Mojonnier to Hudson T. Armerding*⁵⁸

Along with copies of the lease agreement between the College and the Academy and a cash flow projection spreadsheet for February 1 to August 31, 1968, this letter was sent to meet one of its terms which was to present to the College "reasons to continue to operate or our recommendation to close the school." Mojonnier includes assurances that no major building projects will be started unless funds are on hand and that even some major repairs will be delayed at least a year. He informs him that they have plans to substantially raise tuition to cover salary increases and the addition of a guidance counselor. He admits that the problem is one of cash flow but he urges, "I would strongly

⁵⁷Jim Fenton to Herman Fischer, letter, October 24, 1967 (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1967).

⁵⁸Robert Mojonnier to Hudson T. Armerding, February 23, 1968, letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

recommend that we look one more year ahead and say that the school should continue in operation.” He speaks of three men to replace, two who are “coaches who have not fit in well to the spiritual tone of the school; the third is the business manager who had always planned to leave after that year. He ended by saying that “the College has had its best year at the Academy this last year in that it has contributed the smallest amount of money in its experience.” He also added that they had put together a fine faculty, morale was high, and gifts were going to be at an all time high.

*February 23, 1968: Robert Mojonier to Hudson T. Armerding*⁵⁹

Attached to the same letter with a duplicate date was a separate more personal communication from Mojonier to Armerding which addressed concerns about Jim Fenton:

Dear Hudson:

The next major decision is the future of Jim Fenton. As you know, I have been of the opinion that if he did not demonstrate his willingness to raise funds he is of little value to us. He is of value, however, in holding together the faculty and staff and particularly John Reno. John needs one more year to become firmly rooted in our institution and has been the brightest spiritual blessing we have had in the 10 years with which I have been associated with the school. If Jim has really turned the corner and I suspect that he has, then I think the Board will sit down and reassess his position before a final decision is reached. We will do this in plenty of time to cover his position next year if he is not re-employed. He has finally turned his work over to John and Mark Williams and has actually obtained some gifts.

⁵⁹Ibid

*March 11, 1968: Hudson Armerding to Robert Mojonnier*⁶⁰

This letter was identified as a confidential communication to alert him to the fact that the Academy Board needed to assess their financial situation and make a recommendation to the College.

“It was clear that all of us would like to see the Academy continue. It was also clear, that unless substantial sums of money are made available, this is not a strong possibility...it is of critical importance that we know to what degree the Academy Board is able to ensure that funds are made available...there is a real problem if the College will have to find the amount of money that may be necessary to close the gap between obligations and income as presently projected in the [recently received] Academy financial statement. At the moment I just do not know where that money would come from, but some very critical areas would have to be cut back if it was to be decided that support was to be given to the Academy. Some of our Board are quite reluctant to do this, and this is why the action of the Academy trustees is critical.”

He indicates a final decision will be made on March 31 after a first meeting is held on March 21.

“This is being sent to you in confidence and I know that you will ensure that the faculty and administration of the Academy do not receive any word other than the situation is being studied. I share with you the hope that a solution can be found, for I earnestly desire to see the Academy continue.”

It must be that Robert Mojonnier and the Academy Board were able to produce some sort of guarantees acceptable to the College for within ten days he received the following response.

⁶⁰Hudson Armerding to Robert Mojonnier, March 11, 1968 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

*March 22, 1968: Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier*⁶¹

“I am pleased to tell you that our Executive Committee of our Board of Trustees voted to authorize the college administration to renew the lease with the Academy for the 68-69 academic year. This action was taken after the College Executive Committee were satisfied that the Academy Board had meet the two major conditions of doctrinal and fiscal soundness and had a good prospect of maintaining fiscal solvency in the coming year.”

The letter ends with praise for the leadership extended. All is not well, however, as the next series of communications illuminates.

*May 21, 1968: Ken Hansen (Academy Board Member and employee of Servicemaster) to Robert Mojonnier*⁶²

Hansen details his concerns after studying financial information and statements shared at their May 20, 1968 Board meeting that a definite cash flow problem exists and they may not be able to pay suppliers or salaries on time in the next sixty days. He talks about the need of the gifts and pledges on the income side being sufficient to meet the expenses. He requests that Jack Fitzwilliam, their business manager, verify by monthly cash projections each month through next August. He says, “I believe that if Jim [Fenton] will then have to get plugged in to when he believes the income will be present month by month. Jim will see the need for him to spend time in the next two or three weeks on fundraising even though the year end academic program activities seem to be so important.” He closes by “coldly” rejecting what must have been proposed additional housing expenditures “until we have the academy finances in apple pie order.”

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ken Hansen to Robert Mojonnier, May 21, 1968 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

*June 3, 1968: Jim Fenton to Mr. John Fischer, Philadelphia College of Bible*⁶³

This would appear to be a letter sent by Fenton to a potential source for funding. Fenton cites the recent passing of a major benefactor whose contributions had supported scholarships for missionary children who attended the Academy and the impact of the loss of these funds. He thanks Fischer for considering this as a project for the Bible College students to undertake. This researcher surmises that its inclusion in this file was either to document Fenton's beginning attempts to fund raise or to show another reason for lost funding.

*October 23, 1968: Robert Mojonnier to Hudson T. Armerding*⁶⁴

This letter alludes to a conversation in which selling the assets of the Academy must have been discussed. Mojonnier's letter cites eight points of progress that he believes "sooner or later should produce financial results" but he then goes on to discuss a more complex set of problems in regards to different "factions in the school family, each waiting for the other group to act." It appears that one of these groups has addressed their concerns with Armerding for Mojonnier states that

"the fellow whom you mentioned to me the other day represent one group who are more or less sitting in the background waiting for what they believe to be the inevitable. There is another group who are exceedingly loyal to the school but feel that there is no real financial problem and therefore give only modestly. There is a third group who are quite willing to give to the Academy but refuse to 'give to the College.' Then there is a fourth group who are willing to give to a successful program but who hold back because they are afraid we might fail. These include some of our

⁶³Jim Fenton to Mr. John Fischer, June 3, 1968 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

⁶⁴Robert Mojonnier to Hudson T. Armerding, October 23, 1968 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

Trustees. We try desperately to knit all of these factions together and fix their attention on the problem at hand and the advantages of the school and to get them off dead center. With this in mind we are currently instituting a formal Public Relations Program....we are also calling an immediate meeting of the entire school family at which we intend to speak very frankly to them about our advantages, objectives, and needs.”

Mojonnier next brings up what must also have been a conversation topic and that is the ownership of the property. He stated he was strongly in favor of keeping the current arrangement intact for

“if we were to buy the property from the College for the figure of \$200,000 which has been frequently mentioned, it would be signing our death warrant....perhaps a workable position would be for the College to lease the grounds to the Academy for a period of years. I would think that this should not exceed 25 years and should include certain provisions for the maintenance of doctrine and fiscal stability.”

His conclusion speaks to his conviction:

“Of one thing I am certain and that is there has never been a time in the world’s history when this school was so badly needed. I have also learned that the Christian public in Wheaton is keenly interested in the continuation of the school. It appears that it will be much easier to finance a combination boarding and day school than to finance a day school only, although this statement could be challenged.”

Within two days, Hudson T. Armerding sends a response that does not portend well for the Academy.

*October 25, 1968: Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier*⁶⁵

Armerding references having read the letter of October 23, reiterates his desire for its success, but after reviewing his correspondence over time reminds Mojonnier that he “has repeatedly expressed concern about the fiscal management of the Academy.” He

⁶⁵Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier, October 25, 1968 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

sees no advantage in any type of 25 year lease because it would be essentially the same arrangement they currently had and “if a segment of those interested in the Academy refuse to give because the College owns title to the land, a long-term lease would quite probably not eliminate this problem.” He references a phone call they recently had about an imminent auditor’s statement for the current year’s operations and says:

“The preliminary figures would seem to show that the financial picture is very bleak. Thus, unless there is some substantial change in the situation, I see no real option but that the College should take steps to invoke the provisions of our present contractual arrangement with the Academy Board on the basis that it has not been possible for fiscal soundness to be maintained. In anticipation of this possibility I have asked that an appraisal be made of the property since I understand that there are individuals who might be interested in purchasing the buildings and grounds and continuing to operate a school on that site. I think you should know that in the event the buildings and grounds are sold, one of the conditions of the sale would probably be that the name of the school would necessarily have to be changed. I do not think it appropriate for the school to bear the Wheaton name when it in fact is not located in the city nor is it under the jurisdiction of the College. I emphasize that I regret very much indeed that the prospect of terminating the Academy operations looms up before us. Yet I believe that we would be less than judicious and deficient in our stewardship if we did not, after having granted these years of opportunity, now face up to the realities of the situation.”

*December 18, 1968: Status Report from Mojonnier to Wheaton College*⁶⁶

On December 18, Mojonnier submits a report to the College delineating information in support of continuing College support for the Academy. In this report he shows the increase in active school family organizations such as the Women’s Auxiliary, Booster Club, Alumni Association, Development Committee (fund raising), Detroit Committee (fund raising). He provides data to show that the College’s financial support

⁶⁶Robert Mojonnier to Hudson T. Armerding, status report on Wheaton Academy, December 18, 1968 (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

from 1962-1968 has decreased from \$37,500 to \$21,000 while support from others had increased from \$21,182 to \$96,114. Enrollment had declined somewhat from 225 to 218 in the same time period but might be due to a smaller class at Wheaton Christian Grammar School, he noted. He reviewed the capital expenditures in the last twelve years and the operating costs. He summarized the present needs and summarized the problems and need for current operating expense and a method of operation that in future would keep expenses within the scope of gift income which he believed could be realistically expected to be \$125,000 per year with the hope that over that amount would be monies to put toward capital expansion. Finally, he laid out several scenarios for increasing tuition paying enrollment. The main problem was the Academy did not currently have the dorm capacity to house these students, nor the capital to build dorms so that they could capture the increased number of tuition paying students. He closed by saying a workable goal would be \$200,000 to pay up current bills; \$150,000 raised through a fund drive to improve the gym and other facilities; borrow funds to build a “self-liquidating” dorm and a second fund drive to build a girls’ gym. He closed with: “our greatest need is unified prayer. If we plead with the Lord together for these needs, He is sure to answer in His way at His time.”

*December 20, 1968: Wheaton Academy to Wheaton College*⁶⁷

On December 20, 1968, Wheaton Academy transmitted their annual report ending August 21, 1968, a status report on the condition of the school with supporting data,

⁶⁷Robert Mojonner to Hudson T. Armerding, annual report of Wheaton Academy through August 21, 1968 in correspondence dated December 20, 1968 (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1968).

monthly statements for September and October, 1968, and a copy of the budget for the year 1968-69.

A document that summarizes Mojonnier's position was created on January 1, 1969⁶⁸ but it is not clear to whom this document was aimed, was sent, or if it just remained notes in the file. On this one page Mojonnier asks and answers four questions as follows:

1) How far behind financially are we? \$125,000 of which about \$75,000 is the result of capital improvements not yet paid off and \$50,000 the accumulation of annual losses over the past several years; 2) Is it possible to operate on a sound basis? Current enrollment is 215 students and to balance the budget there is a need for 350 students coupled with a slight adjustment in tuition. 450 students and improved fund raising would raise the money needed to pay for needed facilities to serve them as current capacity is 300; 3) How can we get more students and more gifts? Our team during the past two years has been Jim Fenton as Headmaster and chief fund raiser, with John Reno as principal. I am convinced that the time has come to put John Reno in the faculty to replace Gene LeMaire, put the entire operation of the school on Jim Fenton and bring in a man just for fundraising. The development committee of the Board would then co-ordinate with this new man...and will probably produce annual gifts of \$100,000 to \$125,000; 4) What is our immediate program? Raise the \$125,000, plus an additional \$100,000 for the year's operation, conduct an intensive program in town to build town enrollment from 150 to 280, make minimal changes to plant to accommodate students, and encourage the whole school family to pray."

*March 14, 1969: Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier*⁶⁹

Amazingly on March 14, 1969 a letter is sent by Armerding to Mojonnier informing him of the vote by the College's Executive Committee of the Board of

⁶⁸Robert Mojonnier, summative document created January 1, 1969 (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1969).

⁶⁹Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier, March 14, 1969 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1969).

Trustees to renew the lease agreement with the Academy for the 1969-70 school year “with the understanding that the Academy Board would adopt a balanced budget for that year.”

*August 29, 1969: Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier*⁷⁰

Armerding writes a letter confirming a conversation he and Mojonnier had on August 22 concerning proposals approved by the Executive Committee in which in general it was agreed that the Academy should operate for the coming year. There were four conditions: 1) the Academy needed to operate within the submitted budget dated August 21, 1969 any variations were subject to College administration approval, including adjustments necessary due to lower than expected enrollment and lengthening the contract of a new headmaster hire; 2) access would be given to the College controller over the Academy records so that a review of business procedures, accounting, purchasing and the like could be supervised; 3) pay-out schedule for the \$100,000 from the College to the Academy would be according to what was approved with the majority of the funding occurring prior to December of 1969; 4) Academy Board members needed to try to raise funds so that the drain upon College resources would be lessened and that the Academy budget would include a repayment over time of the \$10,000 owed to the College.

⁷⁰Hudson T. Armerding to Robert Mojonnier, August 29, 1969 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1969).

*November 4, 1969: Charles L. Strobeck to Hudson T. Armerding*⁷¹

This letter provides the College with a progress report from the Board of Wheaton Academy's annual meeting including information related to: 1) the new officers including the fact that Strobeck took over from Mojonier as chairman; 2) budget reductions in salaries and the seeking of volunteer help whenever possible; 3) John Reno's assumption of all administrative duties "on a temporary basis and is doing well at great personal sacrifice" while they are interviewing prospective replacements; 4) faculty support even in the face of uncertainty about a permanent administrator; and 5) fundraising drive efforts and the search for a Director of Development and Stewardship to assist in these efforts. Strobeck concludes by saying: "Our short range plan is to find the right Headmaster, a Director of Development, a sound fiscal basis, increase in enrollment, retire all outstanding debt and take care of deferred maintenance. Long range plans are to upgrade faculty salaries provide recreational facilities and provide a better plant for education and physical education needs."

John Reno, 1969-70

It seems from the previous correspondences that Jim Fenton was replaced for a time by John Reno until a permanent headmaster could be located.

March 1, 1970: Wheaton Academy obtains independence
and is renamed Wheaton Christian High School

Prior to 1970, Wheaton Academy was owned by Wheaton College. During this pivotal year, however, the College, despite the back and forth year of negotiations

⁷¹Charles Strobeck to Hudson T. Armerding, November 4, 1969 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1969).

chronicled earlier, believed that due to ongoing financial problems, student disciplinary issues, and declining enrollments, the Academy doors should be shuttered. Not unlike earlier financial crossroads in its history, in an amazing show of unity and persistence, those who believed in its mission rose up to save the Academy. In 1970 some “determined parents and Board of Trustee members rescued and reorganized the school. The Board, under the leadership of the then current Academy Board chairman Charles Strobeck, assumed financial and operational responsibilities from the College. As part of the transition, the College required that the name be changed from Wheaton Academy to Wheaton Christian High School.⁷² Not the first time, the secondary school once known as Illinois Institute had undergone a name change, this new entity would be owned by a not for profit corporation consisting of parents, alumni, and friends who contributed to its support and elected a Board of Trustees. As of March 1, 1970, the Board would be responsible for the operation of school through an administrator. The detail of this transformation can be found in a series of letters and minutes found in the archives of Wheaton Academy and give a special insight into this crossroads event.

January 26, 1970 Special Academy Board Meeting

At a special meeting held on January 26, 1970 of the Board of Trustees of Wheaton Academy,⁷³ Mr. Charles Strobeck “described a series of negotiations which he and Mr. Clansky had been having with Wheaton College President Dr. Armerding and

⁷²Hudson T. Armerding to Charles Strobeck, February 16, 1970 letter, Wheaton Academy Archives in West Chicago, IL.

⁷³“Wheaton College Board of Trustee Minutes,” January 19, 1970 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 1970).

several of the College trustees, the purpose of which was to determine whether the Academy Board would have an interest in taking over full control of the assets of the College now used by the Academy. These assets consisted of 33 acres of land on Prince Crossing Road and several school buildings plus eight residences. Mr. Strobeck indicated that the College in effect was asking the Academy Board to make them a “take-over” proposal.”⁷⁴ Strobeck informed them that while the College’s preference was to turn over the Academy to the present Board if a proposal could be satisfactorily reached, their other two options were to liquidate it to pay off existing debts with profits going to the College or disbanding the current Academy Board and taking the school back into the College as a department. Significant discussion ensued according to the minutes on a range of the following topics: 1) possible adverse effect of changing the school name, 2) sources of financial support including Wheaton Christian grammar school, churches, the community, and the Detroit group, 3) financial liability of Board members, 4) timeline for hiring a new headmaster, 5) timeline for facility upgrades, 5) consideration of expanding Statement of Faith to encompass more Christian people, 6) future of dormitory operation, 7) future of offering housing for teacher and salary upgrades, 8) likelihood of passing local public health standards, and 9) nature of the future Board. Some discussion was held to consider financial support from the state of Illinois and the effect this would have on control of the curriculum and teaching in the school. After much discussion at this meeting, Mr. Strobeck presented a tentative proposal which received unanimous approval. The proposal requested: 1) the College to forgive \$75,000 of debt; to delay

⁷⁴Ibid.

encumbering the school in any debt until the college and bank debts were retired, 3) to change the name of the school to Wheaton Christian High School, and 4) that if the Academy were to be closed and liquidated, the surplus assets would be returned to the College.⁷⁵

February 16, 1970: Letter from President Armerding to Charles Strobeck

A letter dated February 16, 1970, found in the archives from President Armerding to Mr. Charles Strobeck reveals the College's more than positive response reached in a February 14, 1970 meeting of their Executive Committee to this proposal. They agreed to deed the property to the Academy Board of Trustees, accepting the abovementioned proposal with some significant changes including making the previously stated loan into a gift and to pay portions of the tuition of faculty members' children who enroll in the Academy.⁷⁶

The College's counter proposal was reviewed by the Board of Trustees of Wheaton Academy at a February 16, 1970 meeting and the vote was unanimous to accept what they believed to be a more than generous solution. They reviewed the corporate charter from 1958 and identified areas in the bylaws that necessitated revision; including the change of name from Wheaton Academy to Wheaton Christian High School, and the promise that if the Academy closed, its assets would return to the college. A final resolution was made and passed unanimously "That Wheaton Academy purchase from

⁷⁵"Wheaton College Board of Trustee Minutes," January 19, 1970 (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 1970).

⁷⁶Hudson T. Armerding to Charles Strobeck, February 16, 1970 letter, Wheaton Academy Archives in West Chicago, IL.

Wheaton College for \$10.00 and other good and valuable considerations, the land buildings, and other pertinent assets of the College currently used by Wheaton Academy.”⁷⁷

February 23, 1970 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of
Wheaton Christian High School

Minutes from a Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of (newly named) Wheaton Christian High School held on February 23, 1970⁷⁸ record that the North Central Accrediting Association Evaluation report was delivered including recommendations to secure “a qualified headmaster and certification for all teachers as soon as possible” as well as improvements to various facilities. Other recommendations were that the curriculum should be studied and improved, the library strengthened, professional organizations should be utilized, guidance services should be upgraded, and the statement of philosophy of the school should be shorter and clarified. Second order of business was to identify areas of the by-laws that needed revision, especially reflecting their decision to move to a membership election of the Board as opposed to a self-perpetuating single Board. Third, a review of the Colleges’ present Statement of Faith was disseminated for discussion and the decision made to stay with the Academy’s previous Statement of Faith which differed only in the exclusion of the word “pre-millennial.” Fourth, a decision was made to at some future date study and amended the

⁷⁷“Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Wheaton Academy,” February 16, 1970, Wheaton Academy, Wheaton Academy Archives in West Chicago, IL.

⁷⁸“Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Wheaton Christian High School,” February 23, 1970, Wheaton Christian High School, Wheaton Academy Archives in West Chicago, IL.

paragraph relative to Standard of Life or rules and regulations covering the student body at the high school.

May 25, 1970 Strobeck Communication to WCHS Family

On May 25, 1970 a communication was released by President Chuck Strobeck to “The Wheaton Christian High School Family” alerting them to the fact that besides their name change, they were now a separate entity from the college and owned all of the land and improvements on the Prince Crossing site.⁷⁹ The new Board was introduced as “concerned Christian men who have a direct interest in the success of the school as most have children attending Wheaton Christian now” including: John Blanchard, Jr. Roy Clansky, Jr., Wayne Cummings, Jay Huitsing, Paul Hanson, Robert Mojonnier, Paul MacKinney, David Norbeck, M.D., Walter Pieschke, Dr. B. Martin Siml, Al Stob, Charles Strobeck, Bernard VanDerMolen, and Robert Van Kampen. Also introduced was the new headmaster, Mike Davis. The announcement continued by asking for their prayers, their money, and help finding new students to increase enrollment, and their time. An update was provided to inform all that tuition falls \$425 short per child, per year and the progress that was being made to collect \$120,100 in gifts, and finally, information about the new set of by-laws which included the “privilege of membership in the not-for-profit corporation for those who are interested in support of the operation of the school. The two qualifications for membership in the corporation were a *minimum*

⁷⁹Charles Strobeck letter to Wheaton Christian High School Family, May 25, 1970, letter in Wheaton Academy Archives in West Chicago, IL.

contribution of \$25.00 per year per couple and the signing of the *Statement of Faith* as approved by the Board of Trustees.”⁸⁰

The College released a press release titled, “Wheaton Academy Becomes Independent High School” with President Armerding stating that the “action is in response to a request from the Academy Board of Trustees, to undertake complete responsibility for the operation and administration of the school.”⁸¹ He continued to say, “I am very pleased that the ministry of the Academy will be continued under the guidance of a group of enthusiastic Christian men. It is my expectation that the newly organized school will continue to offer Christian Secondary education according to the finest traditions of the Academy.” The memo clearly indicated that “financial assistance from the College will be terminated without further obligation.” Charles Strobeck is quoted as responding: “We feel confident that the program envisioned by Wheaton Christian High School will make significant strides toward meeting the need in our area for Christian secondary education. Those involved with the school have expressed total commitment toward meeting the challenge.” The memo concluded by stating that a “separate Board of Trustees was formed in 1958 to administer the school. Control subsequently passed to the present Academy Board in 1964.”

By-Laws for Wheaton Christian High School, 1970

The new high school was guided by a new set of by-laws written in 1970, which included the *Statement of Faith* written back in the 1920s. The by-laws included:

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Lois M. Ottaway, ““Wheaton Academy Becomes Independent High School,” Wheaton College Press Release, February, 1970, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL

- 1) a requirement that the name of the institution be called Wheaton Christian High School;
- 2) that the purpose of the corporation “shall be to provide Bible centered instruction and training designed to impart a knowledge of God and of his universe, and to train students to cope with life in this world in such a manner as to glorify God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Within this general purpose, the specific objectives of the corporation shall be:
 - a) to provide a comprehensive secondary level educational program which will accommodate both the college bound and non-college bound student;
 - b) to provide for the spiritual, mental, social, and physical development of each student, regardless of race;
 - c) to provide Christian training and education for all students, and shall be co-educational;
 - d) to assume special responsibility for students who are children of persons engaged in full time foreign or domestic missionary service; and
 - e) to maintain accreditation under the North Central Association so long as it does not limit or restrict the Bible training or the Christian character of the school.”⁸²

The By-Laws also established a mechanism for becoming a “member of the corporation.” The requirements were for any interested persons (no requirement that the members had to be parents) to annually sign the *Statement of Faith* in accordance with the intents of the founders of the school, make an annual gift of at least \$25.00 to the corporation, and be approved by the Trustees of the school. Membership entitled one to a vote to approve or reject nominated additions to the Board. Although there is no mention of this next requirement in the actual By-Laws, the publication *Storyline* printed information from Bill Newell that said the sixteen member Board of Trustees was to be

⁸²“By-Laws of Wheaton Christian High School,” 1970, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

comprised of members who were selected from area churches with one of the Board members required to be an area pastor.⁸³ Substantial changes to the By-Laws would not occur again until 2009 under Gene Frost's leadership.

Charles Strobeck, Board Member

Many will say that the man behind the curtain who was able to orchestrate the saving of the school was Charles Strobeck. His name is ever-present in news articles, minutes, and memos in regards to the separation of the Academy from the College. Technically, he was the president of Strobeck, Reiss Real Estate Company and a past president of the Union League Club of Chicago. Though he graduated from Wheaton College, he never attended the Academy, but instead was the father of five daughters who attended and graduated from the Academy starting with Carole in 1972 to Jean who graduated in 1983. All five daughters attended Wheaton Christian Grammar School prior to the Academy and at least one attended Wheaton College after graduation. His parental concern for Christian education is evident when he was quoted in *Storyline*, Winter 82-83: "If ever—at any time, in any place—education that is Christian has been most needed, it is at present. With the erosion of spiritual and moral values, in the business world and everywhere, it is the best support possible to face the issues of life."⁸⁴ His unflagging commitment to the purpose of the school drove him to take a leadership role as one of the more pivotal Presidents of the Board of Trustees of the high school. From

⁸³Bill Newell, "By-Law Changes Approved," *Storyline* 1970, Wheaton Christian High School, in Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL

⁸⁴Charles Strobeck, *Storyline*, Winter 82-83, Wheaton Christian High School, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

that position and his own unbending will and strength of character, it seems undeniable that he corralled the energies of a group of committed Christian parents to save the school from extinction. Jon Keith indicated in his interview with this researcher, that out of necessity Strobeck and several parents mortgaged their homes and assumed the debt and risk of the Academy and because of that they naturally took ownership of running the school, especially Charles Strobeck.⁸⁵ Keith stated that back then the only stability was to be found in the Board. Former Academy headmaster David Roth in his interview said of Strobeck:

He's the kind of guy that would raise money by inviting major donors to Chicago Golf—it's a very exclusive golf course—and into a room and lock the doors and say, "We're going to raise \$100,000 at this breakfast." And I mean, it was about that intimidating, but he delivered the goods, you know, in terms of helping meet payrolls and keeping the school afloat. He dealt with Chicago figures, like Jesse Jackson and Mayor Daley because of his holdings downtown. But he just had a tender heart for Wheaton Academy and Wheaton Christian Grammar, but especially Wheaton Academy. You knew that his word was his bond. And he was probably the type of leader the school needed during that time....he wasn't afraid to stand up to Wheaton College and say, "Okay. You guys aren't going to do this and this. We'll just take over on the school." And he did. [It's important to remember] that Armerding was a commander in World War II, a naval commander but Strobeck was a general [in personality].⁸⁶

This researcher's sincerest regrets is that Charles Strobeck passed away before he could be interviewed by her, but those who were consulted spoke of how when Wheaton Academy needed it most, he was a "general" commanding the moves to be made.

⁸⁵Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

⁸⁶Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

Strobeck stepped down from his position of power after sixteen years on the Wheaton Christian High School Board in 1985 which had its advantages and disadvantages. During his era, the school was run by a strong, centralized governing Board. When he left, Keith indicated, it “was a messy time for the Board who wanted to be more democratic once Strobeck had left, but did not know how to do that and so [the net effect was] they weren’t.”⁸⁷

The Dark Ages

The period of years 1970-1974 has been referred to by many as the “Dark Ages” for the newly liberated institution that was renamed Wheaton Christian High School. Gene Frost, during his interview with this researcher, shared his impressions of this time period: “My sister had been at the school between 1968 and 1972 and in that time she had four different headmasters in four years. My brother graduated in 1975 at perhaps the lowest point; he had 35 kids in his class.”⁸⁸ This series of headmasters cycled included: Michael Davis, 1970-71; Roy Clansky, 1971-72; and Jack Boomer, 1972-74. During Jack Boomer’s tenure, the school terminated its program to house boarding students because of the rising costs, aging facilities, and changing educational philosophy. The “closing of dorms [in turn] caused low enrollment and brought about additional financial problems. The aging buildings coupled with numerous faculty and administrative changes were of grave concern to parents. [The obvious goal was to find a way] to provide good salaries and working conditions to retain a top grade professional staff for school. [It was also

⁸⁷Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

⁸⁸Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

envisioned that] more course offerings [should be developed] to attract potential students and [reclaim a] place in high academic circles.”⁸⁹

Gene went on to comment about how the survival of the school at that point depended on Board President Chuck Strobeck. Gene Frost said, “He was a very powerful person, and I think that was needed at that point. I mean, he ran the Board and he ran the school. He probably saved the school in the ‘70s because he would meet every Monday morning with the administrator [Bill Newell] they hired who was a PE teacher from West Chicago Junior High. That’s not credentials for great leadership, but Chuck met with him every Monday and gave him marching orders. And under Bill’s leadership...well Bill came early, stayed late, got the lights on, recruited kids, raised money...From 1975 to 1983 it was Bill and Chuck running the show...and they tripled the enrollment...When Chuck left, the Board lost a strong leader, and we lost their strong administrator and we started floundering again.”⁹⁰

William C. Newell, 1974

So four years after the group of parents rescued and reorganized the high school, the new Board of Trustees hired William C. Newell, to whom Frost refers in his interview, to turn around a school in its “dark ages,” beset by financial problems, student disciplinary issues, and declining enrollment. Newell graduated from Moody Bible Institute, North Central College and Northern Illinois University. Prior to coming to Wheaton Christian High School he had taught sixth grade in Crystal Lake and then

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

physical education at an elementary school in West Chicago schools for a number of years. Upon his resignation November 15, 1982 for personal reasons, Newell was praised in a *Storyline* article in the Winter of 82-83:⁹¹

Newell came to the school four years after Wheaton Academy became independent...During those four years, the administration changed three times, the dormitories were closed (1972), enrollment declined, teacher turnover was a problem, and there were financial difficulties. In addition the physical plant had deteriorated. Nonetheless the Board and the parents kept the vision alive and kept working and praying...God sent Bill Newell in answer to their prayers. Under his leadership and the hard work of many others, enrollment began to rise again. Because of building code violations, the school had to remodel, build, or close down operation. Phase I of the new building commenced and in the fall of 1990 the new building was completed for student classroom use. Mr. Newell served as Administrator for eight years.”⁹²

Fire Marshal Report on Violations, 1976

As was mentioned in the *Storyline* article, the school was cited with building code violations. In March of 1976, the Fire Marshal of the State of Illinois delivered the high school with an order to address 44 violations linked to its aging buildings saying, “Either dramatically renovate present facilities to make them safe, build new facilities, or close the school!”⁹³ In some ways, this report catalyzed a much needed focus on facilities with an eye to the future. The Board took immediate steps in response to the report to lay a plan to address these issues and was granted permission to stay until June of 1977 while they worked on the problems. A long range plan was formulated by the Board that

⁹¹*Storyline*, Winter 82-83, Wheaton Christian High School, in Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

⁹²*Storyline*, Wheaton Christian High School, Fall, 1984, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

⁹³*Storyline*, Wheaton Christian High School, Fall, 1976, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

included questions about the funding of operational expenditure and capital outlay for school, new building plans, renovations to the existing plant, and mortgage commitments. This plan was unveiled in the “Building for Today and Tomorrow Campaign.”⁹⁴ During Newell’s tenure, and under the leadership of Board President Strobeck, the first of several building program phases were undertaken. Phase One, began in October of 1978 and was finished in September of 1979 and included a library complex and single-story classroom facilities. To his credit, before Newell left the Academy, the enrollment had reached a record of 346, nearly triple what it had been when he was hired. Another important development during his tenure was a different type of building project, but it involved the conscious decision to build connections with the school’s growing number of alumni, many of whom had been instrumental already in helping the school survive to this point and who certainly in years to come would continue that financial and emotional support so necessary for success.

Wheaton Christian High School – Alumni Association, 1978

In 1978 David Gieser, who graduated in the class of 1967, “had the vision for an organization which would unite alumni and extend their ministry to the school beyond their high school days. His desire was to enhance the fellowship among classmates, aid in scholarship, encourage enrollment and be an example to current high school students.”⁹⁵ A small group was gathered at first in December of that year, 1978, including Lon Oury (’65), Tom Paulson (’66) and Dick Gieser (’55) and worked with Henrietta

⁹⁴“Building for Today and Tomorrow Campaign,” brochure, Wheaton Christian High School, in Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

⁹⁵*Storyline*, Wheaton Christian High School, Fall, 1978, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

VanDerMolen [wife of former Board Member Bernie VanDerMolen and eventual Board member herself discussed later in this research] to compile a longer list of potential graduates. They contacted these graduates to see who might be interested in serving on a Board and ten responded. By 1987 the Alumni Board was a twelve person Board, each who served a three year term. Though the archives contain some evidence of previously organized alumni associations and by-laws, it was Dave Gieser who wrote the organization's current constitution patterned after the constitution of the Wheaton College Alumni Association. In 1987 Gene Frost ('71), the current Head of Wheaton Academy in 2011, served as a president of this Board and was also elected to serve as member of the Wheaton Christian High School Board of Trustees.⁹⁶ The Board under Dave Gieser's leadership established improved communication with school and alumni, honorary awards for past alumni, assisted in homecoming activities, and raised money to support the financial aid for incoming students.

The Gieser Family and the Wheaton Eye Clinic

Throughout the historical records of the Academy, there are noticeable connections to clusters of families who are connected to organizations who have at least loyalty ties to the College, the Academy, or evangelical organizations. Servicemaster is one such organization, for example where many Board members or parents are employed. It is also interesting to note the importance and role of the Gieser family and the Wheaton Eye Clinic in the life of the Academy, the College, and the town of Wheaton. Seventy years ago, former medical missionary to China, P. Kenneth Gieser, gave up a promising

⁹⁶*Storyline*, Wheaton Christian High School, Summer, 1987, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

Chicago ophthalmological career to move to Wheaton, Illinois where he felt led to build a world-class eye clinic now known as The Wheaton Eye Clinic. Now in the year 2011, with multi-locations in Wheaton, Naperville, and Plainfield, it is said to be the largest of its kind in the Midwest. Gieser began this clinic “in 1942 with a cardboard box of used equipment and rental space in a dentist’s reception area”⁹⁷ and a vision that included not only a mission of serving local needs but one in which “Wheaton Eye Clinic doctors travel the world teaching and providing compassionate eye care.” Kenneth Gieser’s faith based commitment to serve has been seen time and again through his children and grandchildren as well, as many have attended and supported the Academy and College over the years. It is fitting that one of them—David— had the vision to found the Academy’s Alumni Association. Part of David Geiser’s motivation for this initiative was to support an institution that had made such a great impact on his life. *Storyline*’s Fall 1981 publication recounts his memory of a particular sophomore year chapel service during Spiritual Emphasis Week when he realized that “his total life had to be revamped and that one-day-a-week faith was inadequate. That changed my total perspective, and I made a significant commitment to surrender to Christ,” he said.⁹⁸ After graduating from the Academy, his path took him to Wheaton College where he met his wife Mary and graduated in 1971. He went on to complete University of Illinois Medical School in 1975, followed by several years of internship and residency before joining his father and brother at the Wheaton Eye Clinic in 1980. The story of Wheaton Academy is one in

⁹⁷“History of the Wheaton Eye Clinic,” <http://www.wheatoneye.com/clinic/history> (accessed February 2011).

⁹⁸*Storyline*, Wheaton Christian High School, Fall, 1981, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

which the name Gieser frequently occurs in part because the Christian vision of social justice fostered personal and corporate goals of the family members for generations.

Paul “Pep” Peterson, 1982

As has been said, effective November 15, 1982 Bill Newell resigned as administrator of Wheaton Academy for personal reasons. Paul Peterson, known by most as “Pep,” was not new to the school as he had served on the faculty as a part time Director of Guidance and Counseling from 1957 to 1962, teacher of science, math, and Bible, and served as a dorm supervisor. In 1982 Peterson was named interim administrator to replace Bill Newell in 1982 and served in that role until 1985. Peterson was the brother-in-law to Dr. Paul Groen who was the vice president of the Academy Board at the time. Although he was initially to be in this role only for a year, as he was on furlough from Taiwan where he served under TEAM (Evangelical Alliance Mission) as an administrator for fifteen years, one year soon stretched into a couple. Jon Keith, who would play a large role with David Roth and Gene Frost in the future development of the Academy had been hired in 1981 during the last year of Bill Newell’s tenure.⁹⁹ Throughout the Academy’s history thus far, it seemed to lack consistent long-term leadership and this was a contributing inhibiting factor to its growth. Despite his short tenure, however, during Peterson’s administration, in 1983, the ground was broken for Phase II of the building program plan, which included a science laboratory, an

⁹⁹Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

administrative section with offices, a Board meeting room, kitchen, classrooms, and a multi-purpose commons area. Dedication of the space occurred on October 14, 1984.¹⁰⁰

Dr. James Watson, 1985

Chuck Strobeck stepped down from chairing the Board in 1985 and by that point in time according to Keith, the Board realized they needed to take time to find the right permanent leader for the school.¹⁰¹ They conducted the archetypal nationwide search for the “consummate degreed Christian leader with requisite administrative experiences.” In the end they chose Dr. Jim Watson, who on paper with his Ph.D. and three Masters’ degrees and assistant superintendent experience “in the ASCI world” seemed to make him the perfect choice, but many report that it was four years of tumult during which the Board gave him a lot of authority. He was much more conservative, however, and rule bound than the culture required or was used to and as a result enrollment during these “dark ages” dropped even farther from 370 students to 200 students. The feedback from parents and students was not favorable; he was apparently not the best match at this point in the Academy’s history. On his watch, however, funds were secured due to the assistance of Henrietta VanDerMolen to make the final payment of \$2.3 million on the mortgage for Phase I and II projects.¹⁰² In 1986, lands west and north of the school, owned by Campbell Soup Company were purchased to add to the Academy grounds.

¹⁰⁰*Storyline*, Wheaton Christian High School, Fall, 1984, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

¹⁰¹Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

During his tenure Dr. Watson faced the ever present challenges of leadership during a challenging period of the Academy's history.

Henrietta VanDerMolen and the Mortgage, 1988

When leaders are not in abundance, the Academy's survival has often depended on individual Christians stepping forward to take action, especially in the face of pressing financial matters threatening the ability of the Academy to progress. Typical of the people in this storied past who decided to take action was long time Board member Henrietta VanDerMolen (widow of former Board Member Bernie VanDerMolen) who wrote a letter on February 20, 1988¹⁰³ to relate that she had discovered there was only \$180,486 left on the mortgage; she proposed to commit to paying off 1/3 of that amount if others would commit to pay the remaining two-thirds. She wrote:

As I reflected in early January as to how I might impact for good some phase of the Lord's work in 1988, the work of Wheaton Christian High School came to mind. Upon inquiry, I found there is only \$180,486 due on a mortgage that encompasses the total building costs of almost two and a quarter million dollars. Praise the Lord for such committed giving toward the building funds of Phases I and II these past ten years. Wouldn't it be great to get that mortgage behind us in '88 and divert that \$18,000 per year of interest money into teachers' salaries or other productive channels? My proposal (with Board approval) is this: I will commit to 1/3 of the mortgage (\$60,000 on a matching 1 for 2 basis, to be paid monthly as the funds come in. This letter is being sent to a small, select core of families; those of us who have been closely tied to WCHS in the past, and have made substantial gifts to the building funds. The letter is also being sent to present Board members. The class that entered the new building as freshmen will be graduating June 4. Is it too optimistic to think about having a mortgage burning at their graduation? If we had cash, plus commitments for 1988 gifts totaling \$180,000 we could have a symbolic burning. I am hoping that several of you can take as large a piece as \$10,000 or \$20,000 and that all of you can participate in a

¹⁰³Henrietta VanDerMolen to friends of the Academy, February 20, 1988, letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1988).

significant way....The school has significantly impacted all of our families. I am grateful that all six of our children have graduated from WCHS, and that a sophomore granddaughter is now there. We need to keep the option of a quality Christian education for the next generation. Can we as a group make this our legacy?

A couple of months later, on April 28, 1988 Henrietta sent out a letter¹⁰⁴ to update the group on progress being made. She wrote:

As of March 30th, \$23,241 has come in and [I have] matched it with \$11,620. Additional \$46,500 has been pledged to be paid before the end of May and \$5,000 in December for a total of \$74,741 toward the needed \$120,000. This appeal has gone to about 50 people; those of us who have contributed to the building fund in a substantial way during the past ten years, and to the present Board. So far there have been four gifts or pledges of \$10,000 each plus other amounts. Is it doable by June 4th? It would be a dramatic part of graduation for the first class in the new addition to see the completion of the debt.

And finally in May of 1989, her third letter is titled, "Wheaton Christian High School Mortgage Turns to Ashes"¹⁰⁵ and she wrote:

You and I and 34 other friends of the school made it happen. Enclosed is a picture of the "burning." It was a great afternoon; the two choirs sang, Chuck Strobeck reminisced on the past, as did Ed Morgan. We praised God for His leading over the years, and Don Brinks, present Board Chairman, lit the match. Present Board members attended, as well as many past ones, some from out of state. Two former Headmasters rejoiced with us: Mel Johnson (54-60) and Bill Newell (74-82). The large crowd sang the doxology as the paper burned. We now have debt free buildings at WCHS, which cost \$2.3 M to build. We have eliminated the line item in the operating budget of \$18K per year of mortgage and interest payments. It is far more valuable to invest those funds in the students than in the interest paid to a bank, wouldn't you agree? ...Only to God be the glory for "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

¹⁰⁴Henrietta VanDerMolen to friends of the Academy, April 28, 1988 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1988).

¹⁰⁵Henrietta VanDerMolen to friends of the Academy, May, 1989 letter (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1989).

Signed, Henriettea Van DerMolen, 0S280 Bauman Ct. West Chicago, IL 231-8112

During his interview, Jon Keith shared a memory of this very important woman in the history of the school.¹⁰⁶ It was during his first horrendous year of employment for the Academy, a year marked by an extremely dysfunctional staff and department riddled with problems and non-existent processes. During that time he kept “noticing this little old lady who frequented the bookstore and kept track of all the building fund donations down to the last penny.” He recounted that he took it upon himself this once to reconcile the books for this line item and was off by just one cent; he decided to leave it to figure out for another day. Henrietta discovered this and “chewed him out. She was the most frugal person on the Board and yet I discovered later she was extremely wealthy. She was passionate about peoples’ sacrifices and wanted to be a good steward of money to represent their best interests. She was on the Board as a replacement for her husband Bernie VanderMolen who had passed away; later her son Ed followed in her steps on the Board.”

Looking Back to 1981: Mr. Jon Keith – A Glimmer of Light

Jon Keith’s entrance into the storied path of Wheaton Academy actually stretches back to 1981, but this researcher has delayed detailing his entrance until now because like Dean Schell his longevity and importance is a bridge between both the second and third phases of the storied saga. Unlike many others whose tenure has been cut short, Keith is still serving the interests of Wheaton Academy. During his thirty years of service he has

¹⁰⁶Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

served as business manager (four years), director of finance and development (four years), assistant headmaster/dean/guidance (six years), principal (eleven years), and currently Chief Operating Officer for the past three years. No one has as an extensive understanding of the journey the school has had to make from its “dark ages” to its current state of acknowledged success.

Keith grew up the son of a man who was Headmaster of Houghton Academy for forty years; Houghton was a preparatory high school to Houghton College, a small Christian college in upstate New York with a very similar history to Wheaton. Houghton, like Wheaton, has its roots in the Wesleyan Church, but according to Jon Keith, unlike Wheaton which deliberately became nondenominational, Houghton remained tied to the church.¹⁰⁷

Back in the 1870s and 1880s, Houghton was the miniature Las Vegas of the canal route through Western New York and was called the Sin Capital of the world with people stopping to gamble, to engage prostitutes and the like. What happened there was similar to Wheaton as God led the hearts of me to believe they needed to start a Christian school in the den of sin. So they decided that they would pray that God would somehow transform this little town from sinfulness into a beacon of Christianity. Houghton Academy and Houghton College were started as a kind of revelation of that prayer that started in 1883.¹⁰⁸

So, these two New York educational institutions have much in common with Wheaton College and Wheaton Academy, except that they have never been legally separated. During his interview with this researcher on January 7, 2010, Mr. Keith spoke intently of the impression that high school, and in particular,

¹⁰⁷Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

certain teachers and experiences had made on him at that tender age. Experiences he had as a soccer player on the school team were some of the most vivid memories. His soccer coach was a Christian man who was not afraid to hold the mirror up to the Headmaster's son (Keith) and confront him with some of the behaviors that were not quite Christ like. He was able to get through to Keith because as he described it, the coach had a great deal of "relational capital" that allowed him to challenge the young soccer player about the disconnect between his behavior and his spiritual life. He was courageous enough to show him that he was not "walking the talk." That capital had been gained by being a great coach who first spent time relating to the area of Keith's life that he most cared about at that time: soccer. That capital was an investment in a relationship and when Keith most needed to be confronted, the coach had the capital to spend. This concept of relational capital is one that Keith frequently used in his talks with Wheaton Academy teachers, perhaps using a financial concept because of his business background. He made a distinction with this researcher between capital that is invested and just ordinary savings. Some teachers, he explained, may feel good about students who like them or give them trinkets at Christmas but those savings are fairly static. Capital has to do with the money that we invest so that we can "grow the business." It is about saving up the money so it can be spent or invested in a way that helps the student grow and develop. If a teacher can get through to a

student who needs guidance at just the right moment to help the turn around, that is “relational capital.”¹⁰⁹

After graduating from Houghton Academy and Houghton College with a degree in business, he began looking for a high school with a population of 2,300 students so that it would be large enough to need a business manager who could also possibly be the soccer coach, for he wanted a role much like his own high school coach had played. He sent resumes to at least 80 schools east of the Mississippi and on an afterthought added Illinois. Twenty responded, six showed serious interest and in 1981, in the midst of what has been called the “Dark Ages” of the school, he traveled out to Wheaton Academy for an interview. Jon indicated that everything about that experience revealed the extent to which the Academy was in disarray, from the unprofessional way the interview was conducted to the way in which they actually prevented him from seeing the business office. As he would soon learn, this time period was characterized by “huge faculty turnover and dysfunction. It was not a spiritually healthy place.” He further commented, “They were attempting to shield me from seeing how chaotic the environment was, but the irony was that’s what God used to attract me here because my vision really was to get involved in a place that God could transform like I knew Houghton had been transformed. So the worse it looked, actually the greater the appeal. It was a place that looked like it needed God to do some miraculous things.”¹¹⁰ Keith related that Charles Strobeck, the Board member who orchestrated the 1970 purchase of the school,

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

interviewed him later by phone and simply asked him if he could count because not too much of that had been going on and they had no idea how much of anything they had. Keith recounted that Strobeck said, ‘This place is a zoo. It’s a mess. We don’t know what we have. We don’t know where things are going. We don’t know what’s coming. We just need you to count things and tell us what’s what so we can make decisions. If you can do that, you’ll be successful.’¹¹¹ Strobeck needed someone competent to step in and straighten out the books and provide some structure. Keith’s hiring overlapped Newell’s tenure by one year; his next seven were spent under Peterson and Watson. In the next phase of the life of the Academy he worked for and with David Roth and now is an important part of Gene Frost’s leadership team.

Mac Airhart

One of the key Academy parents and long time Board member that worked closely with Jon Keith, and eventually David Roth and Gene Frost was Mac Airhart. Airhart construction is a well-known home building company in the western suburbs, started by Mac and now run by his son Court. The company’s beginnings go back to a modest painting and house building business begun in the 70s. His expertise in this area coupled with his commitment to the Academy was a special gift for Jon Keith who believes that Airhart has given more of his time and energy to the school in last thirty years than just about anyone else.¹¹² In 1983 Airhart volunteered to be general contractor for a major building project and at the same time mentored Keith in the process. Airhart

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

more recently continued to offer his services in an advisory role during the construction of Heritage Field House completed in 2009.

Airhart's service to Christian education started with his serving for three years on the Board of the Wheaton Christian Grammar school from 1974-77 where his two children attended. He followed them to Wheaton Academy, serving on that Board from 1977 to the present day; he has also served on the Wheaton College Board of Trustees from 1990 to the current day. Mac's vast experience serving on these three Boards over the last three or four decades has underscored for him the importance of continuity of service to an institution in helping it maintain its identity:

I went on the grammar school board in '74. And in '76 we built the addition at the grammar school that was added on to the east side, which was the auditorium, and some classrooms for the junior high portion. I went off the Board after three years. I'd spent three years learning. You sit on a board and it's hard to get to know the institution for the first couple of years. You're there maybe once a month attending board meetings. Over time you begin to develop a macro view of the institution. Sharing with your children their experiences you develop a micro view. The experiences were different but important. When I left the Board, I thought, "Why did I spend the time to learn how WCGS [Wheaton Christian Grammar School] worked and was now having to quit, my term finished?" I felt empty, happy to have been involved, but still at a loss to be leaving. I was experiencing in a small way "institutional memory". As time passed, I began to understand that longer terms for trustees were necessary in the life of an institution. The more successful schools had asked trustees to serve long terms and in many cases, to serve again after their terms have expired. Those longer terms allowed institutional memory to grow, to be nurtured within the hearts of the trustees. Then in time that memory will be passed on, a legacy, to new trustees, coming with their new energy, new ideas, but receiving the gift of an institutional memory that will light the road with the wise lamp of history, bringing stability to the future.¹¹³

¹¹³Harold Mackenzie Airhart, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 21, 2011.

During his interview with this researcher, he shared his point of view about organizational identity and mission and the role Blanchard's early actions played in sustaining it:

Jonathan Blanchard held a strong principled belief in Christ centered biblically based education. It must have troubled him to see the secular drift of eastern universities. So as he established the governance of Wheaton College (and hence Wheaton Academy), he paid special attention to institutional memory and governance. Instead of ownership, responsibility, and control of the institution residing in a denomination, the ownership was God's, and the governance was the responsibility of long serving trustees which included the presidents of the institution. Of interest is that only four presidents served Wheaton College during the more than one hundred years that the College governed the Academy. Jonathon Blanchard had not only established a distinctly Christian institution but also the structure for maintaining institutional memory through a self perpetuating long serving Board of independent Christian trustees committed to Christ and His Kingdom. Blanchard had not only set the course for the college, but for the Academy as well.

Blanchard clearly believed God revealed the truth of the Gospel through the written word, the Bible, but Blanchard also believed that God revealed his truth through His creation, understood within the context of the Bible. The study of God's creation would please the Lord and could even be an act of Worship. I personally believe that those two principles are the foundation of a Christian education, and must be held to by a Christian institution if it is to endure as Christian. That means that all connected to the institution must believe and hold to this creed; that is trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students. Duane Litfin, the seventh president of Wheaton College, referred to this institutional position in his very important book *Conceiving the Christian College*, as the systemic model.¹¹⁴

He next shared his opinion on how the Academy has been able to maintain its identity over time:

Just after World War II the Academy moved from Blanchard Hall on the College campus to its current location on Prince Crossing Road in West Chicago. By relocating, the Academy gained a measure of independence

¹¹⁴Ibid.

but still remained a college responsibility. After twenty years governing the Academy with some difficulty at the Price Crossing site, the College was ready to close the Academy and concentrate on the College's central mission, providing college students with a Christ centered education, top tier academically. But the Academy parents appreciated the school and did not want to see it stop serving their children. The Academy had gradually become more of a day than residential school. So to a dedicated group of parents and friends the school seemed viable. When approached, the College trustees agreed to deed the land to this group, but said the name and entity would need to be changed to fully dissolve the relationship of the Academy to the College. So agreed, Wheaton Academy became Wheaton Christian High School.

As agreed the governance of the new Wheaton Academy, now Wheaton Christian High School was modified. An education association was created to meet annually, approve certain business of the school, and elect trustees to govern Wheaton Christian High School. This structure of governance resembled more that of a denominational school than the original independent Wheaton College model. The Board functioned as an operational board rather than as a policy board and interacted with the school administration weekly and sometimes daily as various crises dictated. Wheaton Christian High School had many strong dedicated leaders who with the help of God were not going to let the school fail. They guided it through some difficult times. They gave generously of their wealth, wisdom, and work, to the point of writing checks from their own accounts so that faculty pay could be met.

Chuck Strobeck surfaced as an extraordinary leader during the WCHS years. As chairman of the board he spent many hours over many years working closely with various headmasters. Other board leaders that played important parts in the life of WCHS were Ed Morgan, Henrietta VanDerMolen, Dwight Peterson and Paul Groen. During one particular hard Board session in the late seventies, I as a young Board member was reluctant to vote "yes" to move ahead with the construction of Phase I of a new education building. I was trying to balance in my own mind the benefits of constructing a new building as opposed to remodeling very old decrepit existing structures. We were being forced into a decision by an aggressive fire marshal that was visiting the campus so often he could have been confused for staff. Henrietta who was sitting nearby at the table, said in an aside to me, "You know, we have prayed long and hard about this, searching for God's leading. This is the right thing to do. And if we make a mess of it, God is faithful. He will rescue us." The chair wanted unanimity and I was struggling but voted "yes". Over and over again throughout the years, I have seen that kind of faith exhibited; men

and women earnestly searching the face of God for his wisdom, his resources for his school. During those more than two decades WCHS not only survived, it prospered. Phase II of the education building was built, numerous buildings were remodeled including the Warrior Dome Gym, and more than two thousand students graduated from WCHS having received a Christ centered high school education and the beginning foundations for a lifetime Christian world view.

By the end of the nineteen eighties change seemed to be in the air. While the mission of the school remained solidly in place, the Board began to think of a new governance model that could better serve the school; a policy board as opposed to an operations board. The education association was put on the shelf. It wasn't really functioning anyway. Only a few people attended the annual association meeting to vote for trustees and other business. The Board then became a self perpetuating Board similar to the historical model at the college.

The Board's main responsibility would be to find the head of school and support him by developing policies reflecting the mission of the school. It was thought by the Board that the school should maybe again be known as Wheaton Academy. Wheaton College agreed. Wheaton Christian High School became the new Wheaton Academy. New trustee leadership emerged, many bridging back to WCHS days. Don Adams, Gene Frost, Ed VanDerMolen, Chris Grant, T.D.Decker, Steve Pierson all served faithfully with the same intensity and passion for the mission as previous boards from the past WCHS era. But this was a policy board, more collaborative and collegial.

In nineteen eighty-nine Dr. David Roth, a well known, loved, and respected administrator, was invited by the Board of Trustees to become the headmaster (head of school). He, with Jon Keith serving alongside, made many significant changes. Teachers became "Living Curriculum Teachers" with standards of excellence clearly defined. Curriculum and programs were added and strengthened. There developed an environment of a more intentional student nurturing, both in academics, the arts, the physical, and the spiritual. With these good things happening, the school began to experience growth again. The student population more than tripled. Phase III of the academic complex was built and with a science complex on the horizon. A fine arts building with an auditorium was added as well as a field house. Over a period of years more than twenty five acres of land has been added to the campus supplementing the athletic fields. Toward the end of Dr. Roth's tenure Wheaton Academy celebrated one hundred fifty years of serving God, educating young men and women. [Loosely paraphrased] the theme for that celebration was appropriately

enough, *see what all the Lord has done*. At the end of Dr. Roth's tenure, serving as Headmaster Emeritus, he began the work of creating the framework for an organization, perhaps to be called the Wheaton Academy Institute. The institute would come alongside other Christian schools helping them to become successful, well organized, long enduring, Christ centered schools.

After Dr. Roth's more than a decade and a half of outstanding leadership had ended, the Board of Trustees embarked on a nationwide search for a new Head of School. While examining carefully the long list of candidates who had put themselves forward for the position, the trustee search committee came to the conclusion that the best person suited for this special work was seated among them at the Board table. Dr. Gene Frost had a very long connection to the school; first as a student, then as a teacher, a parent, a trustee, and now the possible Head of School. Much of the good that had come to pass at Wheaton Academy had at their genesis proposals by Gene Frost, including the very important decision to invite Dr. David Roth as headmaster in nineteen eighty nine. Meanwhile Dr. Frost had become a leading authority on the building of great Christian schools; the mission, the philosophy, the governance, and the workings. The trustees offered the invitation and Dr. Frost graciously accepted the position of Head of School at Wheaton Academy as the second such HOS in what I like to think of as the modern era.

Much that is good has and is occurring at Wheaton Academy under Gene's leadership with his administrative team of Jon Keith and Steve Bult working beside him. A fairer system of faculty assessment is being initiated with merit considerations in salary and position. Along with this is the acknowledgment by a leading Christian magazine that Wheaton Academy is one of the best places to work in America. Long range planning concerning various facets of life at the Academy is on going. The LRP is a living document with its goals constantly under question and its progress under assessment. The LRP is not just meant to just sit on a shelf somewhere to impress an accreditation board. New programs such as the innovative Winterim and the International Student Program are developing, new curriculum with collaborative teaching methods are being explored, the integration of faith and learning with participatory chapels and missions are supported, art as worship is an honored principle, and healthy lifestyles and exercise are encouraged. Athletics are alive and well at Wheaton Academy. With the construction of the new field house, the renovation of the historic (a World War II airplane hanger given by two parent families) Warrior Dome into a performance arena, and the formation of the Suburban Christian Conference, Wheaton Academy students have an excellent opportunity for healthy athletic competition.

It is a very serious business at Wheaton Academy concerning the student's life of the mind, life of the Spirit, and life of the body. The overriding question is will the student come away from Wheaton Academy or any Christian school for that matter, having received an excellent educational experience while developing a Christian World View that will serve the student well as he or she seeks to serve Christ and His Kingdom throughout life.¹¹⁵

Mac related to the researcher what he believed were non-negotiable attributes of the Board members at the Academy:

Well, first we want them to really care about Christian education. Then as well it is good to have trustees from a cross section of society: educators, ministers, homemakers, business people, finance people, attorneys, marketing people, minorities, etc.

When asked if they had to ascribe to a certain nine point *Statement of Faith*, he said:

Yes. [The Academy] is Christian, protestant, evangelical, and orthodox. And the mission, without the centrality of Christ, couldn't be accomplished.¹¹⁶

He described for this researcher what it was like to be on the Board during the "dark ages" of the Academy:

Phase I, of the education building, was done after I'd been on the board for a few years. I believe George Ware out of Rockford was the architect and the general was Church Builder Associates from Lombard. As I mentioned before we had been forced to act by the Fire Marshal. There was a citation for close to 44 violations or something in the mid-'70s or late-'70s. So Phase II was the cafeteria over here and the science classrooms, offices and kitchen. We were able to put a building fund together with some donors picking up the remaining amount of money owed on Phase I. This was approximately five years after Phase I. We built Phase II ourselves internally...I ran the job as a board member [acting for the Board] as general contractor. Many subcontractors

¹¹⁵Harold Mackenzie Airhart, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 21, 2011.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

generously donated to the work. Robert Taylor was the architect of Phase II. The third phase was built during the year that I was off the Board. Wally Carlson was the architect and a general contractor managed the construction. That was the second-story of the educational building on top of Phase I plus the library. This was a difficult time for Jon Keith. The building did not get finished in time. Classes had to be held elsewhere. It was a nightmare of logistical problems. We were helped by the Wheaton Free Church, I believe.

Meanwhile, we had annexed to West Chicago and become a part of the city. It would be difficult to overestimate the effort expended to work through the regulatory issues with the city and the county. This included dealing with a Planned Unit Development associated with our master plan, storm water issues, wetland issues, special environmental issues, endangered species issues, and archaeological issues. Approximately twenty five acres have been added to the campus over the last three decades.

The Fine Arts Building, next to be built, was designed by Wally Carlson and the construction management was provided by Wheaton Builders. The field house and arena renovation was done just recently. Fredrick Quinn was the construction manager. Over the years other work has been done internally such as sport field work, road and parking lot work, gym renovation, tennis courts, lights, and the addition to the maintenance building. We were able to get the lights for the playing field. And that was a struggle because while we had established a really good relationship in the neighborhood, we had two families that were a couple blocks over that didn't want them, and even though we had lights that restricted and redirected the light downward. We did everything possible to makes the lights neighborhood friendly. But well, the city knew we had done everything we could do, and they knew the neighbors were being unreasonable, so while they put some restrictions on us, they let us do it.

I suppose the toughest decision for me was just moving ahead with the first phase of the educational building. That was it for me. For the board? I don't know. Think that we've really tried to understand the Lord's leading. And when we came to that point the decisions weren't that tough. I think if we'd had to make them in our own strength then it would have been impossible to move forward. I think the amount of money scared me. I'm very much an optimist when it comes to doing or accomplishing a project. But I probably had an unrealistic view of what it would take to do the remodeling. And I didn't probably have the strong faith to believe that the amount of money needed could be raised. You know, it was a combination. You know, and I think it was part of my education, that if

this is the right thing, if this appears to be God's will, if this is something we should do then He's going to help us do it. We're going to accomplish it. A testimony to God's faithfulness. It's a faith journey. And I think as you move along that path, you begin to realize that the key is not the monumental nature of the task, but it's whether or not it's something God gives you to do. But it's definitely a faith journey. I think the kids proved that. For me, the first phase was part of that journey. I don't know where it is in Isaiah, but I think it was somewhere Isaiah is prophesying and he's saying that his miracles are for a witness to his people.¹¹⁷

He continued to share his memories regarding the "dark ages" of the Academy particularly as it related to Board President Chuck Strobeck:

Chuck was a very strong leader. I was probably on the Board at least eight years with him. Chuck, in terms of leadership, was the heart of WCHS during those years. Chuck poured his resources into the school. So he not only supported it financially, he came out here on a regular basis, at least weekly, and went through the operation with the headmaster, who was Bill Newell at that time. Chuck guided the school through those years with a very firm hand. He was totally dedicated to Christian education and to the survival of WCHS. He had a strong sense of right and wrong, was very generous and loved the Lord. I think after years of fighting the good fight he probably just got tired out.¹¹⁸

This researcher next asked him about what the Board saw as the upcoming challenges for Wheaton Academy today and he provided his thoughts:

Well, to choose the next Head of School will be a challenge along with enlisting new board members. Those are the two most important decisions a Board will make. Gene will be involved. The next will be to find great faculty, establish great programs and curriculum to keep the school distinctly Christian and improving. Another challenge is to make sure that we have the right policies in place and that the administration is following them. Also a very serious challenge will be to keep the school affordable and accessible.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

What many may not realize, even those working closely with him at the Academy such as Gene Frost, is what this researcher discovered by chance and that is that Mac Airhart's great, great grandfather was Jonathan Blanchard. His grandmother was the daughter of Charles Blanchard. The legacy of the first sixty-five years has been left in good hands.¹²⁰

David Roth, 1988

By 1988, the Board was operating more democratically and hired David Roth. According to Keith, Roth represented what was desperately needed at the time: stability, credibility, and humility and the Board turned the school over to him because there was a willingness to trust him. Having served as principal of Wheaton Christian Grammar school before going out east, he was a known and respected quantity by parents and Board members. The hiring of David Roth marked a turning point in the life of the school. Finally, there was light at the end of the tunnel during this "dark age" and Wheaton Academy was ready to begin making the transition from its adolescent phase to that of a young adult.

¹²⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION:

THE ACADEMY FROM 1950 TO 1988

Adolescence probably rivals the terrible twos as the most challenging period of a young person's life. Many of the adult attributes are present in a teenager, but they are difficult to activate or sustain because questions of identity and immaturity are ever present. Also typical is the tug of war that goes on between the parent and the soon-to-be-a-young adult. Issues of control, responsibility, freedom, emotional and financial support all become important issues in this part of the growth process. It is typical for there to be explosive disagreements, fights over money, and arguments over boundaries. Many of these difficulties dissipate when a young person becomes a young adult and begins to realize who they are, when those questions of identity sort themselves out. But until that time, forward progress is not linear, nor is it predictable. So it is with Wheaton Academy, as it traversed through this second phase of development. Perhaps the biggest question for the adolescent and the Academy to ask and answer was "Who am I and why am I here?" Answers to these questions help clarify the road ahead, help clarify vision.

Under the 65 years of the Blanchards and the years until the move to Prince Crossing Road, what is certain about the Academy is that there was clarity of vision. Unified against slavery, the Masonic movement, the evils of society and unified by their statement of faith and conduct, there was little uncertainty about "who" and "why."

Even the first few years on the new campus under the watchful eye of Dean Schell, all seemed to be well, for the 1950's were halcyon days and as Gene Frost said, students were still going to dinner in dress clothes. One also can't overlook the fact that in these early Prince Crossing years, a chapel was built and dedicated, a gymnasium rose up, and a revival was had that spread across the nation. It is difficult to guess whether the Academy's journey would have been the same had the turbulent 60's not swallowed whole those halcyon days and caused both college and Academy to need recalibration. At the very least it was probably, at least, a factor. Protest era or not, all adolescents on the brink of adulthood, when given the opportunities to do so, do strike out on their own and figure out who they are, separate from mom and dad. And so it was in the life of this Academy.

Kilby's study of the Academy conducted during 1944 contained some clues or foreshadowing to some of what would occur in these early Prince Crossing Years. He identified both the College's need to focus on nurturing and focusing on its own identity of being the best Christian liberal arts college it could be, while at the same time he warned the Academy about continuing down the path of being a school for anyone—troubled students, more mature adults—just because they could afford the tuition. Both are about identity. What exacerbated both of these tendencies should be no of surprise, for financial worries and complications often catalyzes change and eventually a kind of clarity or at least brings one to a crossroads of decision making that may yield clarity.

Gene Frost shared his reflections during his interview with this researcher:

The history of the school when it was connected to the college shared the college's visions, and that really protected the school. And the high

school reflected the college's mission. If you just look back through history, the revival in '50 started on this campus before it moved to the college and became the great college revival of '50. And so they were just intertwined. And the mission of the college, the way they ran the school was right up to '69. Then the 20 years we were cut loose, we had the typical two-page, Christian school vision, which didn't mean anything because it was good stuff nobody could disagree with, you know, heart, mind and soul, learning the Bible, you know. Just all the good stuff you could possibly think of to put into two pages, but it was just a generic, "We're a school and we're Christian, and let's figure out how to do it." And the founding Board chair [Strobeck] said before he died a couple years ago, "We didn't know what we were doing. We just wanted a school that was Christian." So it really was probably lacking a central vision. It lost the connection with the college, and it didn't really have one other than just being a generic Christian school, whatever that meant."¹

This wobbly vision, seen through the lens of the Four Frameworks delineated earlier in this discussion, might meet Benne's definition that the vision be an "unsurpassable Christian vision" at least for a majority of the students and Academy employees, but it seemed to lack the focus and urgency one would expect for a vision that "addresses issues of social justice and that engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally." The rhetoric seemed to be present as emotions were tuned up to meet the challenge of the Atomic Age and to confront 'communism that was gobbling up innumerable square footage of world real estate by the hour,' but the call to live the vision in the present moment does not seem to have been there in quite the way it was under the Blanchards. That focus and urgency are essential to sustain a vision of a cathedral that must be built stone by stone over the centuries.

Perhaps it is a disconnect between belief and action, or as the framework would indicate, a lack of ethos or a lack of those "behaviors and practices that align to vision,

¹Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

that call one to moral action, that insists on service to others” in the present moment. This time period was uneven. Board minutes reflect dismissals of faculty members and/or coaches for behavior not aligned with the spirituality of the campus. Gene Frost remarked that during this dark time, “the English teacher ran off with the dean. And the school had another faculty member kissing a girl out on the football field.”² Jon Keith remarked that it would not be atypical for 20-25 students to be expelled or encouraged to leave from a much smaller population than currently when two or three per year in a class of 600 might be encouraged to leave because of behavior or misalignment of belief.³ Some of the standards of conduct issues no doubt were exacerbated because of dormitory living issues and the necessary supervision that needed to be in place, but perhaps wasn’t. Some of it might be related to the economic pressure to support the overhead costs felt by the school to admit a certain number of students irregardless of the “fit” of the students to the behavioral expectations. The reassertion in the handbook of behavioral expectations signals there must have been some issues that administration felt the need to address.

What sustained the vision through this period of time and ensured that Wheaton Academy would survive the ups and downs of its adolescence was clearly the sheer determination and will of some key individuals, particularly Board members and parents. The names that reappear over and over during this time period are: Robert Mojonnier, Charles Strobeck, Mac Airhart, Ed Morgan, The Oury Family, Ray LeTourneau, Bernie and Henrietta VanDerMolen, the Giesers, to name a few. As they did in 1853, they

²Ibid.

³Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

prayerfully persisted, and took faith-based action at critical junctures, marshalling their personal resources to the task and networking with others of similar persuasion to come to the rescue. There were clearly fits and starts; it was not a linear process. Some might say that the trio of parents/Board members who in 1958 with the pledged support of The Stewards Foundation took an enormous risk to sever ties with Wheaton College, tried to move forward, but in the end failed. The teenager/young adult tried to make a go of it but had to return to live again under the protective wing of the parents. But this overlooks the lessons that were learned and the fact that the Academy emerged from that with a separate Board more dedicated to look at its needs and issues; that was a huge step in the right direction. The events in 1969-70 more successfully led to a severing of the familial ties, but had the events of 1958-1960 not occurred, it might have been more difficult to psychologically embrace the possibility. Certainly, too, the continuity of these families whose children and their children's children have attended the school were a key reason that the vision was sustained. The formal reorganization or revitalization of an Alumni Association by David Gieser in 1978 with the assistance of Henrietta VanDerMolen was a pivotal action that helped mobilize the resources of alumni and potentially increase gift giving and emotional/spiritual support. Private schools—unlike their public school counterparts—depend almost completely on alumni giving to supplement tuition income. Separating from the college and its guaranteed safety net of at least some financial support made this all the more crucial.

The importance of these legacy families cannot be overstated but it is also interesting to note that their powerful emergence may have occurred because of the

vacuum of leadership during certain periods of time in part due to the frequent turnover of Heads of School. Strobeck was Chairman of the Board, but out of necessity acted like Head of School, meeting every Monday morning with Bill Newell to direct the operations. The Board under his leadership was much more involved in operational issues as opposed to policy issues and this micro-managing, while necessary at the time, perhaps, is really not how Boards should function. It occurred in part because of the turnover of administrators during this time period who either did not have the skill set to navigate through these stormy seas or worse, lacked the career commitment to the Academy. A faculty that experiences the kind of turnover in administrators seen during this time coupled with the uncertainty about long term financial viability of the school and the increasingly unacceptable behavior of both students and staff are not themselves going to be making a commitment to the school. It is a descending spiral that is hard to stop. This partly explains the large turnover rate referenced in one of the internal administrative communications. The other negative aspect of allowing a Board to so micromanage the operational side of school is that Board meetings can digress into hours of talking about decisions that the administrators should handle and when the “general” retires as did Strobeck eventually, the Board members left may want to operate more democratically, but do not have the experience or skill set to do so. There needs to be a balance.

Another problem that was revealed in an internal memo from the Academy Board Chair at the time, Robert Mojonnier, to Wheaton College president Armerding, were the number of factions that developed of individuals in different camps of allegiance who

were reluctant to donate money to the school because of their fears, beliefs, and predictions about what the future held for the Academy. The letter inferred that a large Academy family meeting would be held to have a frank conversation about the current state of affairs and to clear up communication misconceptions. This was the right step to take to answer ignorance with fact.

So what happened that enabled the Academy progress beyond this 38 year adolescent phase into the third and final adult phase focused on fulfillment of the vision? In this researcher's opinion, it was the recruitment and hiring of a known stable leader, David Roth, to join with recently hired and very talented finance and operations manager Jon Keith, who together found the third leg of the tripod in former alum, teacher, and current Board member Gene Frost. These three were the right people to "get on the bus." This decision making group shared their strengths to address the challenges in front of them and as the next chapter in the saga will reveal, their first focus had to be on developing a shared understanding of the vision for this Academy to enable it to realize its mission of social justice in the 21st century.

CHAPTER VIII

FULFILLMENT OF THE VISION: THE ACADEMY FROM 1989 TO 2011

Dr. David Roth, 1989¹

David Roth began his education at Indiana University, transferring to a Bible college in Germany during his junior year which was made possible because of his bilingual abilities. He returned and graduated from Fort Wayne Bible with a major in social studies. He obtained his master's degree in political science and political philosophy from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb which is also where he went to obtain his doctorate in curriculum and instruction. While he was completing his doctorate, in 1967, he started a twenty year career at Wheaton Christian Grammar School, first as a teacher and then later principal. He next spent the two years, 1987-89 as principal of Lexington Christian Academy in Boston , which as he describes it was “a flagship Christian school in New England” and enabled him to have “exposure to Harvard interns and prep schools like Groton and Phillips Andover, the very kinds of schools that prompted the founding of Wheaton Academy.”² As he told this researcher in what would be yet again a brief but familiar rendering of the organizational saga, “What prompted the founding of Wheaton Academy, among other things, was a small group of parents who were praying for a situation with their young people that was becoming

¹Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL December 23, 2010.

²Ibid.

increasingly concerning to them, and that was they were sending their high school kids out to these prep schools. They would come back and be messed up theologically or philosophically. So the parents had the famous prayer meeting on the grassy knoll where Blanchard Hall is located, and Wheaton Academy, then called, Illinois Institute, was formed. And then in 1860, the college grew out of Wheaton Academy. And Wheaton Academy became the preparatory school for Wheaton College.”³ In total, Roth had twenty-two years of experience in Christian education, before coming back to provide leadership in 1989 as Head of School for Wheaton Academy.

Roth recounts that he was heavily recruited for the position in part because he was a “known quantity because of [his] twenty years at Wheaton Christian Grammar School.”⁴ Several of the Board members at the time—Don Brinks, Bernie, Henrietta, and George VanDerMolen, and Ed Morgan—were individuals who he had known from the days when their children were at the grammar school, which was the K-8 sender school for Wheaton Academy. Gene Frost indicated that these Board members called Roth to ask him about his interest in the position.⁵ As it happened he was going to be in the Chicago area for personal business, so although he was not particularly interested in the position, he agreed to talk privately about the opportunity when in town. After the meeting, he indicated he would go home and pray and think about it and let the Board members know. His first response to them was that he was not interested, but as Gene

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

retold the story, then sleepless nights set in and Roth believed God was moving him to accept the call which in the end he did. Had he not taken the position, the Board was beginning to solicit Gene Frost who emphatically today says that he, Gene, would not have been the right type of leader for what the school needed at the time.⁶ The Academy was at one of its lowest points and it needed the calm, credible stability of David Roth who brought to bear his reputation from grammar school days to the position and settled the questions of parents about the future of the school.

He also secured the confidence of Jon Keith, principal at the Academy, whose credentials, in addition to education credentials, included an MBA and life experience attending Houghton Academy in New York where his dad was headmaster. Keith related in his interview that as Roth was accepting the position, he (Keith) was preparing his resignation.⁷ He had just endured eight difficult years and had a lead on a more promising position. He was persuaded, after hours of conversation, however, by Board member Ed Morgan and David Roth to stay. Morgan counseled him that he needed to think twice before changing too many things in life at once (his wife was about to give birth) and Roth persuaded him to accept Roth's belief that God had called both of them to be at the Academy. He reminded Jon Keith that he, David, had not wanted to come initially, but he was convinced that God had great things in mind for the Academy and those plans included Keith as well. Keith relented and stayed.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

Roth related to this researcher that he learned from Keith and various Board members that many challenges were present at the struggling Academy including: financial cash flow problems, facilities in need of repair, significant declining enrollments, questionable quality of teaching faculty, to name a few.

They were problems of such severity that grammar school parents, a natural customer base, were reluctant to send their children and that contributed to the overall problem of low enrollment and lack of cash flow. As Roth said, “Parents did not like some of the chaos there. I was the 32nd head master...at a 150 year old school....that’s a lot of head masters. If you go back and look at the tenures of the headmasters, [before I left] I was probably the third longest. That’s one of my complaints about school administration...the turnovers. You can cover tracks for three to five years as an administrator, and then you’re off [to a new position]. I know there are arguments against longevity, but [if you stick around] you really have a chance to build on a foundation, build a curriculum, and philosophies and programs if you’re there awhile. You also have to deliver the goods because you can’t hide things for twenty years!”⁸

Reconstituting the School and its Mission, 1989-90

It was not long before Roth and Keith identified from frontline day-to-day personal experiences that as Keith reported in his interview, “there was no alignment of people to a philosophy.” He went to relate that “We surmised that if you got our philosophy straight, and began to align the people with that philosophy, then ultimately

⁸Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

the programs and the place would take care of itself.”⁹ The first step to take then was to write a new purpose statement which when written read, “Wheaton Academy seeks to ‘nurture growth through excellence, relationships, and service all to the glory of God.’” The school’s decline in the years before David’s arrival was due largely to the fact that, as David and Jon both indicated in their interviews, very little excellence, quality relationships, or even service was in evidence. Gene Frost also weighed in on this necessary first step with this explanation:¹⁰

It [the school] really was probably lacking a central vision. Once it lost the connection with the college, it didn’t really have one other than just being a generic Christian school, whatever that meant. When we reconstituted the school in ’89, ’90, we said we must have a mission, a central mission that we can point everything to. And that’s when we came up with ‘*Wheaton Academy’s mission is to nurture growth in our students through relationships, excellence and service to the glory of God.*’

In fact, the reason we let those teachers go the second year was we just said, “Relationships. Do they like kids? Excellence. Are they good in the classroom? Service. Do they come early and stay late?” And there were a third of our teachers who either didn’t like kids, couldn’t teach, and wanted to come late and leave early. So everything got measured against our [new] standards. And even today I had a family come in, and they had an 8th grader who visited our school along with several other schools. And they said it was totally different when he [their son and the prospective student] got into the car after at day at Wheaton Academy. At all the other schools, he had no reaction. He wouldn’t talk about it. And he got in the car [this time] and he was animated. And they said to their son, “Well, what’s the difference?” And he says, “The teachers care about the kids.” And they said, “Well, how can you tell from one day?” He says, “They know their names. They ask personal questions. You can just tell they care about the kids. And I want to go to a school where my teachers care.” Well, that is our mission: relationship, excellence and service. And the kids know teachers love them, are good in the classroom and want to serve

⁹Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

¹⁰Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

them. So we just hammered and hammered away at that mission statement, and it's been the center of everything we do. And the service really is the social justice piece that's kind of blossomed in the last eight years, once we got everything else kind of stabilized. We hire based on that statement. And we prioritize our programs based on that statement. When I wrote my book, and I think I tell this story in the book where I interviewed one of the teachers here. I said, "What makes Wheaton Academy a special place?" And they went on to talk about the relationships that you have with your students and teacher. They went on to talk about how we seek excellence in fine arts and athletics. We're not afraid to try to be the best, and we don't apologize for it. And then we also tell our kids that it's not about them. They have to go and turn around then and serve others. So I was already excited to hear this teacher tell me, as a capstone of his interview, and I said, "Tell me what Wheaton Academy's mission statement is?" And he stared at me and he went blank. And he says, "I guess I should know that, but I don't know what Wheaton Academy's mission statement is." I said, "Well, you just gave it to me. You just said it was relationships, excellence and service." And I interviewed the next person after that, and I told him that story. And the next person says, "Oh, well, that's easy to explain. We don't memorize it because that's who Wheaton Academy hires. They hire the mission statement." So we hire teachers who are all about relationships, excellence and service. So when you measure, that's what you measure everything against and then programming the same thing helps us meet that standard and that mission. And that's why we went aggressively into service. Not too many Christian schools allow students to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for foreign missions. They would see that as a conflict of interest and would say that's the church's job. And you know, they're desperately trying to raise their own money. And we said, "No, that's kids serving. And that meets our mission." And we told the kids not to try to hit up the parents, but they could hit up other kids and they could raise as much as they could possibly raise by doing it as students having an impact and serving others. So I think that was a little bit of, you know, a revelation for other schools because typically you won't do fundraisers in a school other than for the school. But it met our mission statement of, hey, we're here to serve and that's our goal. How can kids do that if they only think about themselves and their school?"¹¹

The recasting of the mission statement was clearly an important moment in time in the life of Wheaton Academy and seems to have been in the end accomplished due to

¹¹Ibid.

the persistent efforts of Dr. Gene Frost, who joined the Board in 1987, Dr. David Roth who was hired in 1988, and Mr. Jon Keith, hired in 1981, who as Frost recounted locked themselves up in one of the conference rooms within the main office, committed themselves to staying until they had hammered out the wording of the new mission statement. Frost indicated that while they were all in general agreement, each of them was invested in a specific contribution to the statement:

David's input into that statement was absolutely wanting service and to the glory of God. Those were his two anchors. We all agreed on excellence. I wanted relationships. But [crafting that statement] was really a Board/administrative team effort. We locked ourselves in that room one night and wouldn't leave until we had it done: Jon, David and I. We all said "excellence" [should be included] because we had none at the time. David felt very strongly that service had to be in there somehow and that Glory of God had to be the anchor. And I said, "I know it's got to be built on relationships. First God." So we all kind of contributed to it and questioned, "Well, what's the natural order?" Well, probably relationships, excellence and that results in service and to the ultimate Glory of God. So we finally with our focus on growth in students, we decided to pick an agricultural model because we were trying to get away from the industrial model. And that was part of the name change [back to Wheaton Academy from Wheaton Christian High School] because the modern high school was started in the industrial revolution about mass production and the Biblical model is agricultural. It's [going back to a focus with students on their] growth. It's [about] nurture. It's weeding and watering. So we picked growth as the model, and through those steps all to the Glory of God, and that's how we came up with it."¹²

For Christ and His Kingdom to Soli Deo Gloria

Roth had also transformed the historic "For Christ and His Kingdom" to Soli Deo Gloria or "To God be all the Glory" which while it honored the legacy of the historic cornerstone college motto, it also provided a reinterpretation of it to underscore this new era for this antebellum Academy. During his interview with this researcher on December

¹²Ibid.

23, 2010 he indicated that the origin of the phrase could be tied back to the musical composer Johann Sebastian Bach who used to sign his compositions when finished with SDG or Soli Deo Gloria to indicate to whom he credited his talent and inspiration.¹³ Soli Deo Gloria is one of five “solas” which are latin phrases “that articulate the five fundamental beliefs of the Protestant Reformation, pillars which the Reformers believed to be essentials of the Christian life and practice. *Soli Deo Gloria* “states essentially that everything that is done is for God's glory to the exclusion of humankind's self-glorification and pride. Christians are to be motivated and inspired by God's glory and not their own.”¹⁴

The new mission statement was the first step in reconstituting the school, but later discussions would began to identify other essential attributes of the Christian Academy they were hoping to work toward. These essentials were called the “non-negotiables” by Jon Keith in his conversations with Roth, but it was Roth, Keith related to me, who elegantly renamed them “The Immutables.”¹⁵

Wheaton Academy Immutables

Simply put, according to David Roth, the “Immutables” are distinctive, unchanging attributes to which an unflagging commitment was important. These immutables are delineated in one of the Academy promotional materials as follow:

¹³Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION: *SOLI DEO GLORIA* is a Latin phrase meaning Glory to God Alone. Our commitment is to glorify God alone in every aspect of the program at Wheaton Academy.

CHRISTIAN STANDARDS: Distinctively Christian standards of conduct and responsibility for all members of the Academy community which will nurture individual spiritual growth and development and should be maintained.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: High-quality academic standards and scholarship for students and teachers should be maintained in the context of a Christian college preparatory school education.

FAITH AND LEARNING: A life-long integration of faith and learning in a Biblical perspective should be nurtured by the Academy's educational program and should be applied by the graduate to life beyond the campus and around the world.

SERVANT LEADERS: The academy should assist in the development of Christian leaders who by their attitude of service to the needs of individuals and organizations will positively impact the world.¹⁶

Five “Immutables” from Jon Keith

During his recent interview, Jon Keith delineated and discussed the following list of five essential attributes with some anecdotal elaboration.¹⁷ He claimed the “Immutables evolved from conversation all of them had throughout the chaos of 1989-90. While there is overlap between the previous list and the following discussion, taken together they paint a picture of some of the identified values and purposes that were growing out of their early experiences as they made choices about how to right the nearly sinking ship of a school.

¹⁶Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

¹⁷Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

First Immutable: Living Curriculum Teachers

The first immutable, Keith said was hiring “the right kind of teacher, or a ‘Living Curriculum Teacher,’ the latter again being Keith’s term. As Keith explained during his interview with this researcher, he was influenced by some crucial professional experiences he had when Roth asked him, a business manager, to also wear the hat of Dean/Assistant Headmaster in those early days of 1989. Steeping himself in research and learning from experiences, he quickly discovered through working his way through countless behavior referrals that this troubled earlier version of the Academy was “filled with kids who hated their teachers. Eighty percent of the referrals were caused by the teachers and usually they were wrong.”¹⁸ He recounted a story about a parent who had called to complain that his daughter’s teacher had taken off his shoe and thrown it at her, hitting her in the head. Incredulous, Keith confronted the teacher whose first retort was that it was a mistake as the shoe was aimed at the student in front of her. That teacher in time decided to leave the Academy fortunately as Keith started to exert pressure to change this culture of hatred toward kids; amazingly he explained on his way out that he wanted to leave because of these changes because “now it meant that kids were no longer afraid of him because they knew the administration wouldn’t defend his actions.”¹⁹ At first, Keith found that teachers lost confidence in him as a Dean because he confronted them with the fact that they were, in fact, the problem. This experience helped him to

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

define what a “Living Curriculum” teacher should be by looking at what a teacher should not be like.

Second Immutable: Mature Culture

The second Immutable Keith talked about in his interview was the need for the high school to have a “Mature Culture.” Keith explained that most high school students are not given the opportunity to act as maturely as they are capable of being, and in fact, many of the kids and parents hated their Wheaton Christian Grammar school experience when they reached grade 7 and 8 because David Roth, when he was headmaster, treated all grades with a consistent disciplinary policy. Keith believed it took Roth two years at the Massachusetts Christian high school to really learn how to work with high school age students and problems which prepared him for his return to be hired by the Academy. Keith indicated that they all talked about the “Ladder of Maturity” which presumed students would be at the highest rung unless they proved otherwise through actions, necessitating that collectively they would be walked down to the appropriate rung below. Keith mentioned that during the interview process with prospective students he told them that if they “had self-discipline, self-constraint, and self-motivation, they would do just fine at the Academy.”²⁰ He conjectured that twenty years ago, during the “dark ages,” it was not uncommon for the smaller school to expel or otherwise dismiss 20-25 students a year. Currently in a much larger school of 600, those encouraged to leave or those who occasionally were expelled numbered more like 2-3 a year, in large part because of the change in expectations and how students were treated.

²⁰Ibid

Third Immutable: Parent Partnership

The third “Immutable” Jon Keith discussed with this researcher was for the school to embrace a “True Parent Partnership Mindset.” Keith believes that many public schools and their teachers tend to have an adversarial view of parents. He said now when he hires a teacher, he looks for teachers who love parents and have examples of partnerships they have formed. The teacher must exhibit an understanding that they play similar roles in wanting the same goals for the students to be realized.

Fourth Immutable: Spiritual Culture

The fourth “Immutable” relates to embracing an authentic and relevant “Spiritual Culture” for the teenagers. Jon explained that rather than have the “big time chapel speakers,” he believes one should give the students the floor and let them give their testimonies which can be a bit scary for adults because one is never sure what they’ll admit to or refer to. “It’s messy, but it’s real,” he said. He explained that Chip Huber, who was hired fifteen years earlier as the school’s chaplain/youth pastor/soccer coach, talked about “Participatory Now spirituality, not just stuff to put in your spiritual backpacks for the future.” He challenged students to think about what they were going to do now about and with their spirituality. “In asking students to think about how it connects NOW to beliefs causes them to embrace Service, how to be a servant today, not just on a June mission trip. One result of this transformational thinking was the Zambia project discussed later. Keith also emphasized that it meant the students and God needed to be trusted. “Chip did not need to bring down the tablets from heaven; he needed to trust the kids with this project and that God could and would speak directly to the

students.” Keith was referring to the fact that the adults believed the students should be satisfied with setting a goal to fund raise for a few goats when the students believed they had been led to fund raise to build an entire school...and amazingly they were able to do that. The adults needed to learn to trust the students and to trust God.²¹

Fifth Immutable: Being an “AND Institution”

The fifth “Immutable” that Keith discussed with this researcher was what he called the need to have a view of one’s school as an “AND institution” as opposed to an “OR institution.” He provided examples to explain the concept. He said that most Christian schools operated with an OR philosophy. “We can have high academic standards OR relational teachers. We can have Christian testimony and sportsmanship in our athletic competitions OR we can win the game.[But Keith wondered,] “Why can’t we do both?” We started talking about this in the mid to late 1990s and found that when we changed the kind of teacher we were hiring, they started acting like AND teachers and then demanding that we function that way. Keith believed that in his own Wesleyan church background and experiences, there was “a fear of excellence for what are you sacrificing spiritually to have allowed you to be so serious about your studies, for example. Wheaton Academy now has the platform to be an AND organization and we need to figure out how to help or show other Christian schools how to do that.” Faith integrated with Academics is an AND concept, for example.²²

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

Living Curriculum Teachers

David Roth next talked with this researcher about the value of having the best of what he has come to call “living curriculum teachers.”²³ He currently has a list of approximately 100 characteristics of a living curriculum teacher but simply put, he is first looking “for a teacher who loves God. A Christian school is based upon that presupposition. Two, a teacher that loves students and really is interested in them as individuals. I developed a mentoring program which underscores that and third, I want teachers who are passionate about not only education, but their field of study. I think that a living curriculum teacher also needs to really understand the philosophy of Christian education...which is that you also partner with the home and the church with the school being the third leg of the stool....I think one way we were able to get good teachers is by having more than one person interview them. I would have Jon Keith interview them; I would have department heads interview them and sometimes parents and students. You put all that together and you have a pretty interesting profile of the teacher, in addition to checking out their recommendations of course.”²⁴

According to Gene Frost’s *Learning from the Best* one of the early challenges confronting Dr. David Roth in his second year as headmaster of the Academy was to address this quality of the teaching staff.²⁵ It is one thing to have a goal of having a

²³Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

faculty of “living curriculum teachers,” but practically speaking how does that transformation happen?

One of the first steps in setting the Academy back on the right track was making sure that there was a close alignment between this new mission and those faculty charged with helping to carry it out. Part of the struggles during this period Frost refers to as “the dark ages” of the Academy were related to having the “wrong people on the bus” and to a lack of clarity about the school’s mission. With the arrival of Roth, Keith, Frost and the Board took some courageous steps which forever altered the trajectory of the school’s journey.

The Napkin and the Yearbook

During the time immediately following the writing of the new mission statement David, his principal Jon Keith, and Board president Gene Frost, set upon the task of the evaluation of the teachers. At one meeting in a local restaurant, a compelling conversation about teacher quality led to their drawing of a chart on the back of a napkin, on which they built a simple grid. The grid was used for the scoring of each teacher on a scale (-1, 0, +1) in each of the three focus areas of the mission statement: excellence, relationships, and service. They employed simple definitions and corresponding questions for each focus area and found that the reality was that about a third of the teachers were failing in one or more categories. They left the restaurant with a plan to confront the teachers. After a first year of warning, nothing had changed, so their contracts were not renewed and Roth was faced with organizing and dedicating resources to a national recruiting campaign which amazingly led to hundreds of applicants from

which to select from for what Jon Keith would dub “living curriculum teachers.”

According to Frost, attendance almost tripled in fifteen years and Keith added that this change “had the most dramatic effect in transforming Wheaton Academy. Mr. Keith recounted in his interview that near the end of the first year after they had hired seven superb young replacement teachers based on their “fit” with the categories on the napkin, a strange thing happened. He and Dr. Roth were paging through the new yearbook and found their way to the dedication page. The student yearbook editors had decided to dedicate the book not to an individual as had been the case in the past, but to a group of seven teachers, all of them new to the school, who the students felt were worthy of this recognition. At first it did not dawn on Keith and Roth, but eventually they looked at each other in delight and amazement for they recognized that these were the seven hired recently for their high marks in the three categories of excellence, service, and relationships. Without telling any of the students about this personnel story, the students had found their own way to reward those they viewed as “superstar” teachers. It was a rewarding moment to be sure, recounted Keith, and helped to make up for the difficulty of releasing veteran teachers during the past year. Those who remained and those who would be hired would be mentored to understand what it meant to be what has been called a “Living Curriculum Teacher.”²⁶

²⁶Mr. Jon Keith, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

“Before the administration spent 80 percent of its time solving problems caused by teachers [and now that] time can be spent finding quality teachers.”²⁷ Keith went on to say that “the resulting culture is one where kids can flourish. We try to treat kids as more mature than their age....we also try to release kids to lead.” The Zambia project is an example of that transformed culture bravely begun by actions taken by Dr. Roth, Dr. Frost, and Mr. Keith.

Teacher Hiring Requirements

Clearly the passage of time has allowed Roth, Keith, and Frost to further develop their notions of how to go about recruiting and selecting teachers that are worthy of being called “living curriculum teachers.” Keith described some of his current thinking and procedures that evolved from these early courageous decisions in the late 1980s, early 1990s. He remarked that the Academy probably has one of the most comprehensive online teacher applications that ask teachers to respond in a number of areas. In addition to that, he delineated his categories of thought when hiring.²⁸ Prospective teachers need to be:

SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY

Just as one thinks about physical health, what are the key components a teacher should be practicing to keep spiritually healthy. How is their confessional life? How often do they “clean the pot”? How long is the time between the sin and the restoration? How long does it take between when God brings something to their attention and they finally fix it. The shorter the time, the healthier they are. It’s a discipline of seeking God’s face to find and attend to our impurities. And what are their safeguards or

²⁷Gene Frost, *Learning from the Best: Growing Greatness in the Christian School* (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 2007), 28.

²⁸Mr. Jon Keith, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

points of accountability? What systems do they have around them to bring them back if they stray (although it might be a church, a prayer group, a Bible study group, a spouse, he would look for something beyond those generic answers)?

MOTIVATED

Keith believes that it is impossible to externally motivate most adults. He wants to hire teachers who are already motivated.

ALIGNED WITH BELIEFS

A key belief is how they “see kids in a certain way.” Do they see the potential in students. Do they view them like wrapped Christmas presents under the tree and can’t wait to unwrap them and see what develops?

If they meet the first three criteria, then he looks at SUBJECT COMPETENCIES, INSTRUCTIONAL CAPABILITIES, CREATIVITIES, AND ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITIES.

Keith related to this researcher that “once we started hiring these types of teachers after first aligning the criteria for hiring with the mission statement, they’ve “blown the roof off” the development of programs and opportunities for students because now teachers are begging to do things (one started recently a skeet shooting club). We used to have 1,800 slots for 600 kids a few years ago; now we have 2,350 spots for 600 kids in extracurricular opportunities. And now the applicants are pouring in for our teaching openings...they smell this place and they’re hungry to be here...we’ll have 400 applicants for 6 openings.”²⁹ He also mentioned that during the first five years after they rewrote the mission statement, they directed their “energies to address the deficiencies in teachers regarding their relationships and service aspects and then we later addressed teaching credentials, which mostly took care of itself. Those seven teachers we hired especially because of their strengths in those first two categories... they only stayed four

²⁹Ibid.

to five years, but their presence helped to change the culture...they were life-shapers. It was like the flywheel in *Good to Great*; once they got it moving, it moved and we were able to and still are able to attract and hire more and more of the right kind of teacher.”³⁰ Keith’s current work has him focusing on what he calls “Double-teamers.”

Double-Teamers and a New Design for Teacher Evaluation³¹

Double-teamers in sports, Jon Keith told this researcher, are those players who are so crucial to the game that their absence is doubly or triply felt; when they are gone, it feels like the absence of more than one player. If one loses them to injury or a rival team, it is almost unimaginable how one can replace them, their impact is so great. So it is, Jon Keith, says with a certain kind of teacher. Unscientific though it might be he began to make a simple inventory in 2003-04 of those teachers he deemed worthy of the title “Double-teamer.” A simple evaluation based on the napkin rating scale assists him with the calculation. Back then it was about 14% of the teaching faculty; this current school year the number is approximately 36%. He believes that their revised hiring practices that pay attention to the criteria embedded in the mission statement—relationships, service, and excellence—have contributed mightily to the increase in what he calls these “impactful teachers,” an example of which would be Chaplain Chip Huber who guided the development of the Zambia Project.

Chip graduated from Bethel College and was involved in youth ministry in Minnesota. He was attracted first to the boys and girls soccer coach positions that were

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

open at Wheaton Academy which related well to his passion for sports. He was originally interviewing for a guidance counselor position as well, but after his interview, a new position of Spiritual Life Coordinator was created for him and thus his ministry began in 1995. His years at the Academy, prior to his leaving to take a position at Cornerstone Bible College in Michigan, related well to his own acknowledged mission statement which reads: “My life mission that God has called me to pursue is to...personally invest my time and energy and gifts into helping raise up a new generation of student disciples of Jesus Christ that will bring healing and hope to our world.”³². Chip is an excellent example of what Keith calls a “double-teamer.”

Both Jon Keith and Gene Frost are in the final stages of designing a new teacher compensation plan that is nothing like the pay raises based on years of experience and earned graduate hours that most public schools utilize and which also circumscribed rewards at Wheaton until now. Instead they took the base pay and developed categories to which they would attach a percentage of the salary. For example, if the total base pay a first year teacher would normally receive would be \$27,000, then in the new system \$5,000 of that might be identified to use to reward for credentials, \$10,000 for responsibilities (is the teacher able to teach only Algebra I or can he or she teach all the math courses and lead math team curriculum development?), and \$12,000 was reserved for a category described as impact. Each category had descriptors and levels of performance mapped out with some non-negotiables identified, but Keith’s feeling was that the greatest salaries should be going to those teachers who were excellent teachers

³²*Wheaton Academy Connection* 4, no. 1 (February 2008) (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 2008).

and impactful teachers. The ratios were also set to discourage teachers from working at Wheaton Academy who were not desirous of being impactful because it is almost impossible to make a living on \$15,000! Evaluations also include student evaluation data as students are asked at the end of the course to answer twenty questions on each teacher, questions which are addressing each of the three aforementioned categories, categories directly tied to the mission statement.³³

Winterim Program Launched in 1990-91

Winterim had its origins around 1991 at the Academy and is what Burton Clarke would call a distinctive program. It was and is the type of program that attracts and showcases “impactful teachers” and by doing so further enabled the actualization of the newly written mission statement. Under the leadership of Dr. Roth, but inspired by an idea Jon Keith borrowed from his days as a student in upstate New York’s Houghton Academy, the innovative *Winterim* was first launched in January of 1991.³⁴ *Winterim* at the Academy was and still is a “mini-semester between the traditional first and second semesters” offering students a number of opportunities to explore subjects, careers and engage in service activities, many of them abroad. Dr. Roth explained this new program metaphorically by talking about growth and the role of Wheaton Christian High School in that process with students as he wrote in 1990:

Life Changers ...WCHS is in the business of changing lives. We can't offer a money-back guarantee stating that if a student's life isn't significantly changed, his tuition will be refunded. We can, however,

³³Mr. Jon Keith, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

³⁴Dr. David Roth, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

clearly state up front our commitment to being known as life-changers. The change we are referring to is growth. The opposite of growth is no growth or atrophy. ...changed lives occur as growth occurs....growth occurs when there is a sincere effort to glorify God. Growth is a Biblically based phenomenon. Christ himself set the example. Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God. Growth occurs through relationships. The first and primary relationship is the students' relationship with Jesus Christ. Growth occurs through excellence. Excellence is defined as "doing one's best." Growth occurs through service. We need to go beyond the integration of faith and learning to the application of faith and learning which is service for the Lord. What is the chief end of man? What is the mission of Wheaton Christian High School? The mission of WCHS is to glorify god. God is glorified through changed lives...Lives are changed when growth occurs.³⁵

This researcher's son engaged in a variety of *Winterim* activities from 2007 to 2010 including: 1) mission trip to Costa Rica with a team of his classmates to rebuild a playground basketball court in a disadvantaged neighborhood; 2) mini career-internship shadowing an architect at Mac Airhart's construction/architectural firm; 3) West Coast Seattle to San Diego van trip with thirty students cleaning up beaches and parks along with visiting colleges and universities; 4) and staying on campus to take a variety of mini-courses that showcased a variety of talents of "living curriculum teachers."

140th Anniversary Chapel Address by Gene Frost, 1993

1993 marked the 140th anniversary of Wheaton Academy and though there was still much work to be done to bring to life the vision of the cathedral set out by the Board and Dr. Roth and Mr. Keith, the foundation had certainly be laid. It was evident in the programs that were developing, the types of candidates that were applying for positions, and in the rhetoric and speeches marking special occasions, the 140th being a prime

³⁵David Roth, Wheaton Academy *Link*, 1990-91, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL, 1991.

example. This sense of accomplishment and maintenance of mission and identity over time was even captured in this 1993 *Chicago Tribune* article by Casey Banas which stated that: “DuPage County’s oldest school is celebrating its 140th birthday this month, with its primary mission still the same as the first day of class on Dec 15, 1853: delivering a Bible-centered education focusing on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ...As part of the school’s emphasis on a ‘Christian perspective’ teachers are encouraged to weave Biblical principles into their instruction of secular subjects such as history and science, headmaster David Roth said. Alumni Dr. Gene Frost, invited chapel speaker, retold the now familiar story so important to sustaining the organizational identity of the Academy. He reminded all students that the Academy was started as Illinois Institute on what would become the Wheaton College campus by Wesleyan Methodists who wanted a school emphasizing Biblical teachings. The Wesleyans including Warren Wheaton for whom the city was named sent their children to eastern Boarding schools but were upset that they did not take a stand against slavery. And they opposed alcohol consumption.” “They needed a school to stand against the flow of secular society,” Frost said, and that mission is still strong after 140 years. [Frost continued,] today, banners hang from the chapel rafters, proclaiming the same messages that have been the school’s foundation for nearly a century and a half, including, “What does the Lord require of you?” and “Act justly, love mercy. Walk humbly with your God.”³⁶ The talk referenced by Casey Banas was an important one for it illustrates once again the elements of the organizational saga present in so many historical artifacts this

³⁶Casey Banas, “DuPage County’s Oldest School is Celebrating Its 140th Birthday,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 29, 1993, About DuPage Education Section, Section 2D, page 2.

researcher has located. This saga is shared and celebrated with the entire school family, not only to celebrate the milestone to which they have come, but to reinforce the message they must carry forward as they now are part of the story and have an investment in it.

Stones of Remembrance Chapel Talk, 1994

Board member Gene Frost's text was drawn from Joshua 4:1-7. "This morning I want to talk about memorial stones. A memorial stone is anything that reminds us of our past. The Bible tells us how important it was for people to have reminders of their past. Before these people would go into Israel and enjoy all the things in Israel, God wanted them to remember all the things he had done for them. Memorial stones are important for those who come behind us to build their faith. The importance of the history of this school and the importance of its 140th birthday is that there have been memorial stones being laid for one hundred and forty years....Yesterday I went over to Wheaton College to their archives, and I asked them to give me the oldest stone that they had, and here it is. This is the oldest stone that was laid for this school. It is the very first minutes from the very first meeting on a hot, August 18, 1852, written in the hand of Warren Wheaton. This is a stone that was laid to begin this school, the first thing that was ever printed about this school trying to advertise to get students like you to come, and it tells why this school was built. These original stones tell us why we are here today...The important piece of this stone is that these people wanted a different school....A school to stand up against the social ills like slavery, to stand up against the corrupt personal habits like drinking, and to stand on Jesus Christ. The important is not only did they lay the first stone 140 years ago, but there have been faithful people laying those stones ever since.

The markers that I want to talk about are the personal memorial stones because those are the ones that I built when I was here and the ones that you are going to build while you are here. You see...the stones that are going to bring you back are the personal memorial stones. Let me tell you about those....”³⁷ Dr. Frost continued by recounting for the students stories of his memorable teachers, teachers who helped in some ways to build his inner cathedral.

Some Stones, Not So Remembered

During his interview with this researcher, Dr. Roth talked about his ideas relative to this stones of remembrance concept and how he had plans to promote the concept.³⁸ He first referenced the Biblical story captured in Joshua, Chapters 3 and 4, in which God had parted the Jordan River so the Israelites could safely cross, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, into the promised land . When they had crossed, God directed Joshua to have one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel pick up a stone and carry it to the other side where Joshua piled them into a memorial or special remembrance of the miraculous way in which God had brought his people to their promised land. Dr. Roth had procured some stones with the intent of placing small piles of them at certain places around campus to commemorate God’s miraculous hand in helping the Academy accomplish more of its “promised land.” For example, he indicated that after the Fine Arts building was built, he intended to have a pile of stones placed nearby. His stockpile of stones, he related, were kept behind the Armor Building. “Next thing I knew,” he chuckled, “ they

³⁷Dr. Gene Frost, “Stones of Remembrance,” in *Storyline*, Spring 1994, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL, 1994.

³⁸Dr. Jon Keith, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

were taking my stones and using them to do things like ring the edge of the road through the campus to keep people from driving on the grass....so that concept didn't quite fly!"³⁹ When he was asked to delineate the points in time he'd choose to remember, he said, "Well, one was 1853 when the parents made the decision to start this school. Another would probably be 1945 when they moved down to this incredible campus. Another one was that revival in the early 50's. Another was 1970 when parents again stepped up, this time to take over the school from Wheaton College. Another would be 1995 when we changed the name back to Wheaton Academy."⁴⁰ Though David Roth believed that "not everybody gets excited about metaphors like that," what he may not yet know is that current head of school Gene Frost is planning something of a similar nature to be ready for the 160th celebration in 2013. It will be a history walk, with various points on the campus physically identified because of the important events or people from history associated with them. Currently, Dr. Frost indicated to me that the points on the walk would include: 1) Academy Hall, one of the few historic buildings left that will be cited in memory of the dorm life and missionary kids who populated the campus; 2) the orange painted "Zambia bricks" from Kokola Village that are embedded along the foundation of one side of the atrium entrance to the school on which are imprinted the names of individual children who have died from the AIDS pandemic; Zambia was the recipient of dollars raised by Academy students as they developed a service project; 3) a plaque erected by the Class of '50 for the WWI and WWII veterans; 4) the rebuilt chapel

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

brought from Camp Ellis, IL which is the first place of worship on its current campus for the Wheaton Academy family and the famous gingko tree outside of the chapel in honor of a beloved past headmaster from 1955, Mel Johnson and his bride Joyce, to name a few.⁴¹ Clearly this is a school that values and celebrates its identity in very symbolic, even metaphorical, ways which Burton Clarke would point to as evidence of how the organizational saga is continuing to be imprinted on all involved.

Wheaton Christian High School Reclaims Original Name, 1994-95

There were other signs that the Academy was regaining its identity and historical sense of self in the years that followed the rewriting of the mission statement. In 1995, under Roth's leadership the school returned to its roots and reclaimed its name as Wheaton Academy on the 25th anniversary of its legal separation from the college. The idea began to be discussed by members of the Alumni Board in 1990.⁴² Dr. Roth in his interview with this researcher indicated that he had "asked Bill Pollard, who was the Chairman of the Board at Wheaton College, to see if it would be okay if we went back to the name Wheaton Academy. He checked. And they said, "Yeah, we don't care."⁴³ "After it was determined that the College Board had no opposition to the reclaiming of the name, the Alumni Board, with the endorsement of Dr. Roth, proposed the name change to the high school Board of Trustees. In October of 1994, the Board of Trustees voted to recommend returning to the name Wheaton Academy and then in May of 1995,

⁴¹Dr. Gene Frost, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

⁴²"A New Name That is Not Really New," *Storyline*, Summer 1995, Wheaton Christian High School (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1995).

⁴³Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, West Chicago, Illinois, December 23, 2010.

the Corporation voted to accept the Board's proposal to return officially on August 1, 1995 to the name, Wheaton Academy."⁴⁴

Though often overlooked, the naming or renaming or reclaiming of an ancestral name of an institution is an act that has great symbolic significance, akin to the ceremonial naming of children. And so it is important to pay attention to the importance of this excerpt from a Wheaton Academy chapel address given by Dr. Roth on February 20, 1995 when he explains the rationale and also reveals the shape of the organizational saga in that era.⁴⁵

The Board of Trustees and the alumni Board have proposed a name change for our school. They have recommended returning to the name "Wheaton Academy." As head of the school, I strongly endorse the name change. The name Wheaton Academy was used during the school's long affiliation with Wheaton College. In 1970, the name was changed to Wheaton Christian High School to reflect its independence from the college. Why change our name? It is our strong desire to return to a name that more accurately reflects our school's history and its vision. We are historical. Not many high schools can trace their historical roots back to 1853. The term "Academy" captures the historical flavor of the school. "Academy" also captures our vision for the future. Wheaton Academy implies a school for special instruction: a school that is different and unique. I see the high school model, or as I like to call it, the factory model high school, failing. In a recent poll, only 2 percent of Americans awarded the nation's schools a grade of "A". More than 50 percent of Americans surveyed feel our nation's schools have become worse over the past five years. Remember an "Academy" is a specialty school. It is different. It is unique. The difference between an Academy and a factory-model high school is obvious. However, you will also see some differences between Wheaton Academy and a traditional Christian high school. Here are the key components of Wheaton Academy.

⁴⁴"A New Name That is Not Really New," *Storyline*, Summer 1995, Wheaton Christian High School (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1995).

⁴⁵Ibid.

ESSENTIALS

Christ-centered: the goal of seeing young people come to Christ and grow in conformity to HIS image is and always will be the number one goal of Wheaton Academy.

Parental involvement: WA must reflect parental and church values in order to provide a consistent learning environment. We work in partnership with parents.

Life-Changing Teachers: Education for a student ultimately boils down to student/teacher relationships. What is taught and caught is largely dependent on the character, quality and expertise of the classroom teachers. It is essential that we continue to attract and retain life-changing teachers who understand and implement our philosophy of education.

DISTINCTIONS

Value-filled Education: In a world that increasingly teaches relativity in matters of values and ethics, Wheaton Academy seeks to teach the absolutes that are found in the character of God and in His Holy Word.

Personalized education: Wheaton Academy is committed to staying small...between 400-600 students. Bigger isn't always better. I want our teachers to personalize their teaching as they seek to help each student be successful.

A mature Educational Climate: It is possible to create a climate that respects the maturity level of the individual student and encourages each student's best effort.

SPECIFICS

Educational Basics: We never abandon the basics to pursue curricular fads that come along. Teaching the basics will continue to be our emphasis.

Learning to Learn: We want our students to be life-long learners. We want each student to walk out of school with the tools for learning.

Technology: Technology is a tool. We have begun to use it effectively in our school. Our computer applications compare favorably with any of the large high schools and most of the better private schools in the area.

Servant Involvement: Life cannot be lived in the classroom. WA must take every opportunity to help students apply what they learn both academically and spiritually in everyday life. Servant hood is our goal.

When I came here nearly six years ago, the finances were shaky. Enrollment had dropped greatly. I was repeatedly asked, “Who would want to teach there?” Today the questions are, “When do we announce a waiting list for the 95-96 freshman class? Which teacher do we hire out of the hundreds of annual applicants? When do we start building some more classrooms? When do we upgrade Academy Hall for expanded use? We need a band/orchestra rehearsal room, another science lab, another computer lab, a new gym and an auditorium that will hold our entire anticipated student body. When is ground breaking?” There has been significant progress in recent years, progress that suggests we are becoming an Academy. Perhaps the greatest development has been a refocusing by trustees, faculty, and administrators on the students. Our vision for WA is that together we will focus on nurturing growth in the whole student –mind, body, and soul. We envision nurturing students, students who understand the Biblical significance of relationships, students who do their best, which is the Bible’s definition of excellence, and students with servant hearts. A name does not make a school, but a school is known by its name. All that is done under the name Wheaton Academy will be done to the Glory of God, as it has been done for the past 141 years.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Dr. David Roth, Headmaster

Letter to Parents About Name Change

Following the chapel address to students, Dr. Roth sent a letter home dated February 24, 1995⁴⁶ to parents to address many questions that had arisen by both students and parents who were uncertain about the wisdom of the change. The first question he related that had been posed to him was: “How will people know that this is a Christian school if we call ourselves Wheaton Academy?” He responded: “A school is not Christian because it says it is; it is Christian by the way its players talk and act during a game or if teachers are truly integrating their faith with the subject they are teaching. A change in name does not change who we are. We will continue to be a *Christ-centered*

⁴⁶Dr. David Roth, letter to Wheaton Academy parents, February 24, 1995, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

school which upholds our Mission Statement to nurture growth in students through relationships, service, and excellence *all to the glory of God.*” A later section of the letter addressed a second question that had been posed to him. “When Dr. Roth leaves, will the next administration transform Wheaton Academy into a different notion of what an Academy should be?” He responded: “We have a 140 year history in which, even with changing leadership, the school has remained consistent in its Biblical teachings. In the summer of 1852, a small group of individuals knelt in the tall prairie grass on a hill in Wheaton (where Blanchard Hall, Wheaton College is now located) and dedicated this institution to God. These parents prayed for a school ‘Where their children would not run the risk of contact with teachers of doubtful religious or moral zeal.’ That is precisely our prayer today. Even with this lengthy past, I am reminded that we do not and cannot know the future. It is a matter for prayer. As our forefathers prayed for future generations, we also need to pray for the future generations of students who will attend this school. The future of this school is in the Lord’s hands. I trust that His direction in this decision will bring Him glory.”⁴⁷

The Foundation of New Era Philanthropy, 1995

The financial health of Wheaton Academy, or really any private school not enjoying the promise of state funding, is always a factor in the ups and downs of its life story. Certainly finances have been an issue since its inception in 1853. Like any organization, Wheaton Academy has investment decisions to make in hopes of gaining a good return on their dollar. The Academy along with a number of other Christian

⁴⁷Ibid.

organizations including Wheaton College invested in what they believed to be a sound financial product brought to them by a Christian by the name of Jack Bennett that involved a matching gift program known as the “New Era Foundation.”⁴⁸ Instead of receiving promised funds totaling \$800,000, during the summer of 1995, the Academy learned that it was among about “300 not-for-profit institutions and individual donors who had invested in a company now bankrupt. The school had deposits at the foundation totaling \$400,000 and had received prior to that point amounts totaling \$155,000. It was apparent that the Academy and others were victims to a type of a ponzi scheme. Dr. Roth released a statement on July 15, 1995 in *Storyline* to inform the school family of the school’s involvement with the foundation and that “all funds solicited from the school’s donors will go to their designated purposes. Individual donors and trustees have clearly communicated to me that while we have suffered a painful setback, they want to make sure that nothing be allowed to distract us from having an excellent school which truly honors God. We thank the Lord that the financial stability and ongoing ministry of the school will not be affected.”⁴⁹

During his interview with this researcher, Roth indicated that fortunately the Academy had been given back all of its investment due to the efforts of many lawyers joined together fighting for the College, Academy, and other Christian organizations.⁵⁰

During this researcher’s interview with Mac Airhart, it was apparent that even today he

⁴⁸Mr. Mac Airhart, interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL

⁴⁹“Statement on Wheaton Christian High School Involvement with the Foundations of New Era Philanthropy,” *Storyline*, Summer 1995, Wheaton Christian High School (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1995).

⁵⁰Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, West Chicago, IL, December 23, 2010.

feels distress over this sad chapter in the financial history of the school. Board member consensus at the time was to make this investment, though some were hesitant to do so as it sounded too good to be true. At the point of decision, Mac indicated that the Board agreed should the deal “go south,” they would as individual Board members commit to repay what the school had lost. He indicated that after the recouping of most of the money invested, there was still an amount of about \$60,000 which Board members did repay to make the school whole.⁵¹

Financial Need – The Do’s and Don’ts

Private schools are frequently in need of additional resources because beside tuition dollars, the only sources of income they receive are from gifts and donations. The history of the Academy has been riddled with financial need and several leaders in its storied past have either voluntarily stepped aside or were moved out because they were unable to successfully or enthusiastically wear the additional hat of fundraiser or financial campaign manager. Those who have money to donate sometimes give it freely and sometimes there are strings attached. One story that left an impression on Jon Keith was shared during his interview with this researcher; he simply referred to it as “the donor story.”⁵² Back in 1990-91, scarcely a couple of years into the turnaround of the school that he and Roth were leading, they really needed to find a way to become more financially solvent. Jon recounted that he remembered that David Roth came to him and said, “Listen, I’ve got a big donor who has approached me but there are strings attached.”

⁵¹Mr. Mac Airhart, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 21, 2011.

⁵²Mr. Jon Keith interviewed by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

Jon recounts sitting there thinking how desperate they were for money, they were in need of more tuition paying students, the school was on the brink of financial disaster, but that he did not believe it a good idea to take money with conditions attached, and then David spoke up and said they should not take it but just trust the Lord. Jon remembers it being a turning point in their faith and their decision making process about the future of the school. They were not going to allow someone not in alignment with their mission to buy them off, even for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Academy has become in recent years much more strategic and deliberate about soliciting financial support from alumni and prospective donors. David Roth's gifts in this area were to develop and maintain friendships and contact with individuals who were friends of the Academy. He is well-known for his notes, birthday cards, well-wishes, and humble offers to pray for those in need. His genuine caring for people created the right environment for them to think about supporting the school with their resources. One significant endowment came from Eunice Wilson who was an elderly lady of his acquaintance with whom he kept in contact and at her death she remembered the Academy in her will. The Eunice Wilson Legacy circle has now been formed to recognize others who make substantial donations to the Academy. While Roth was not the sole individual involved in many of these situations, his gentle spirit undoubtedly paved the way for others to secure from these donors the help the school needed. He shared with this researcher that he learned over time to not solely depend on single large donors' but to seek assistance from many people, citing the Biblical story of the Widow's Mite. Not only was this good for the school to have this distributed base of alumni

support, but over the long term, it was a more dependable base of support as single donors when gone can leave big holes.⁵³

Student Enrollment and Demand on Upward Track

A clear sign of the school's reinvigorated state of affairs can be seen in a review of the increasing enrollment figures during this time period. In 1989-91, the enrollment hovered around 203 to 209. Beginning in 91-92 the enrollment began its climb hitting 319 in 1994-95 and climbing steadily each year thereafter to a high of 642 students in 2008-09. Increasing numbers of applicants allows a private school to become more particular about its application and selection process in order to ensure the closest alignment exists between its mission and those who will need to carry it forward.

Materials Provided to Prospective Students, 1995-96

The success of the school was fueled by higher quality teachers, which in turn drew in greater numbers of student applicants. In materials provided to prospective students in 1995-96 now housed in the archives, the admissions policy of the Academy is clearly delineated:

Admission to WA is a matter that is handled with great care. The main intent of the Admissions Committee is to determine the amount of agreement that exists between the home and the school based on Biblical principles. Parents and students must agree with the Christian philosophy and objectives of the school and the need for a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Since we are not adequately prepared to meet the educational needs of every student who applies, we must make selections. Wheaton Academy is not equipped to provide proper education

⁵³Dr. David Roth, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, West Chicago, Illinois, December 23, 2010.

for children suffering from severe physical handicaps, learning disabilities, or emotional problems.⁵⁴

The instructions to applicants continued by asking them to read and sign a Statement of Faith, the same Statement crafted by Charles Blanchard and his committee in the 1920s. A teacher recommendation form asked for the applicant to be rated on academic ability, motivation, perseverance, integrity, emotional stability, concern for others, demonstration of leadership. A recommendation from the church pastor was also required. Athletic philosophy was also discussed with a focus on “role model coaches who model Christ-like attitudes and behaviors. Because a high school student’s participation in athletics often helps foster a pattern of how to approach difficult tasks, major challenges, and intense pressure, athletics should be viewed as a crucible for developing Christian character.”⁵⁵

Excerpts from the Student Handbook included in the packet of prospective student information clearly identify that the mission of Wheaton Academy in 1995 was “to nurture growth in students through relationships, service, and excellence to the Glory of God. Specifically, we want to see students developing right relationships with God, as well as with their parents and peers. Students should begin to model Christ’s example of serving others. Finally, students should be striving for Biblical excellence, doing one’s best.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴Wheaton Academy Student Application for Admission, 1995-97, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Wheaton Academy Student Handbook, 1995-96, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

The handbook identified the importance of:

- 1) **Christian Service:** Every Christian is “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them, Ephesians 2:10. There will be opportunities for students as groups, and individually, to serve others both at home and away from school.
- 2) **Attendance at Chapel:** students are encouraged to approach Chapel as a worship and devotional time during which they may learn about God in a different context from the classroom. It is the Lord we worship. Students are encouraged to bring Bibles. Students are encouraged to form and participate in prayer groups and Bible studies during the school year. Peer accountability groups are an important help to spiritual growth.
- 3) **Code of Conduct and Appearance:** While there is not a uniform, there is a dress code. It is our desire at Wheaton Academy to do all things in accordance with the teachings of God’s Word. The manner in which we speak and dress are two evident ways of giving open testimony to what is in our hearts.
- 4) **Philosophy of discipline:** We work with each student individually; maintain standards; expect cooperation between home and school; deal with forgiveness and consequences; and realize the limits of our discipline.⁵⁷

Student Application, Signing the Pledge

Before a student’s application was complete, they were to read and sign the Student Pledge, again descended from the *Standards of Conduct* from the College formalized years before. The purpose of the pledge was explained as a way of being sure that students entering the Academy and parents preparing to enroll their children “understand and agree with the purpose and standards of the school.” *Standards of Conduct: Guidelines for Christian Living* is the title of the document that students were asked to read and agree with to complete the application and includes the following ten guidelines.

A student at Wheaton Academy should:

⁵⁷Ibid.

- 1) Actively work at building and nourishing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- 2) Think about things that are true noble right and pure (Phil 4:8);
- 3) Choose your friends and associations carefully (Psalm 1:1);
- 4) Encourage one another and build each other up;
- 5) Communicate directly with one another in the spirit of love (Matthew 18:15-17);
- 6) Respect authority (I Peter 2:17);
- 7) Be honest and above reproach (Proverbs 8:7);
- 8) Care for your body as a temple of God (I Corinthians 6:19—Refrain from the possession and use of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, illegal drugs, abusing prescription drugs or any other harmful substance or activities;
- 9) Maintain Biblical standards of morality (I Corinthians 6:28)—save sex for what and when God intended, within the sanctities of marriage;
- 10) Demonstrate self-control (James 1:9).

Students who agreed, signed the back page, after reading this statement:

“It is my desire to be a part of the student body of Wheaton Academy. It is my desire to grow in the ways described in our Mission Statement. I affirm that I have read the Student Pledge, and understand its contents, and also affirm that I have read the Student Handbook. I will observe the Biblical principles set forth in the Standards of Conduct, abide by the expectations in the annual Student Handbook and will consciously seek to develop the pattern of life which will honor the Lord Jesus Christ in my personal, family, and social relationships.”

Parents also sign a similar statement acknowledging their understanding of what was and is expected. These documents are included in the student handbook.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Wheaton Academy Student Handbook, 1995-96, Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

Vision 2003 Campaign, 1998

In 1998, the flywheel was turning and the Academy launched yet another building campaign entitled, “Vision 2003,” to raise funds to build the second floor on the academic building and to build a brand new Fine Arts Center and auditorium/chapel large enough to provide a place for the entire school of over 600 to congregate. The project was delayed somewhat by the economic downturn which occurred after September 11, but the facility finally opened in 2003.

The Zambia Project and a Growing Sense of Social Justice, 2002

Having a beautiful new chapel in which to gather and profess one’s faith in God may be the first step but to truly sustain a set of beliefs, one’s actions must be in alignment with one’s words. This is true for an institution, just as it is for an individual. Benne’s work repeatedly points to those institutions who understand this by looking at the ways in which they “walk their talk.” It is a function of that all important concept, Ethos. Wheaton Academy in recent years has captured national attention because of The Zambia Project, a student catalyzed initiative begun in 2002 to demonstrate through action their compassion and concern for a region of HIV/AIDS stricken Africa. A group of seniors on a summer retreat in Colorado were brainstorming ways to provide spiritual guidance for the then school of 575 students as part of an initiative to encourage senior class leadership called Project L.E.A.D., begun by “living curriculum teacher” and the school’s Chaplain, Chip Huber. Searching for something besides routine prayer breakfasts, the group encountered a project called One Life Revolution a few months later in October of that year. This World Vision project aimed to involve students in

Aids relief efforts in Zambia by giving them a grocery list of targeted fundraising goals ranging from the donation of \$8 to buy a farm animal to \$53,000 to build a brand new school. The academy seniors, appalled by their research reflecting American evangelicals' low prioritization on the AIDS epidemic, felt called by God to dream large and began presenting ideas to their classmates about how to contribute through personal sacrifice so that money could be raised to build the school. In the beginning money was slow to come in even though they reminded their peers that if each of the 575 students gave only \$100, they would more than reach their goal. Encouraged by one of the living curriculum teachers serving as their mentor, the group turned to daily prayer focused on this project and were amazed to find that by the end of the year they had cleared \$80,000 which was enough to pay for the schoolhouse, the largest priced item in the catalogue, and to order one of every other item in the catalogue. The following several years found them raising additional funds to feed the children of Kakolo, Zambia for an entire year. A team of students traveled to Zambia as did the school's soccer team in order that they might firsthand see what the impact had been. They next committed in 2004-05 to raising \$110,000 for a medical clinic including a maternity ward so that babies would be born healthy and free of HIV. After that, the Academy students launched AIDS Student Network at www.aidsstudentnetwork.org with the goal of recruiting 1,000 American high schools to join them in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Chaplain Chip Huber in a May chapel service spoke of his recent visit to Zambia, remarking, "I love the fact that the God of the universe loves to do the unthinkable."⁵⁹

⁵⁹Jeremy Weber, "Raising the Compassion Bar," *Christianity Today* (August 2005).

What occurred in this project almost more important than the individual building of a school and medical clinic was the transformation of belief systems of Wheaton Academy's students. "Students now sense a connection to their Zambian peers, as well as a responsibility. Some sponsor Zambian children through agencies like World Vision. Others display pictures from Zambia as daily reminders of what life is like for children in Kakolo, and many have dramatically changed their spending and giving habits. The project's original team has graduated, but they are bringing to their college campuses the message of world needs as well as evidence that students can make a difference right now."⁶⁰

Project Moyo

This past year the decision was made to move on from Kakolo, Zambia where Academy students partnering with World Vision had raised money to build a new schoolhouse and a medical clinic. The school's Project L.E.A.D. team announced that work would continue with World Vision in a southern region of Zambia in the Choma District. Project Moyo, as it is called is now an initiative to assist with the expense of building Ndoni High School, the first ever high school in this community. The verse chosen by the student led Project L.E.A.D committee, guiding the project, is from I John 3:18 which reads: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."⁶¹

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹"Project Moyo: One High School Building Another," flyer written by Wheaton Academy Project Lead Team, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, 2010.

Local Service Initiatives Developing

Though the Zambia project and now Project Moyo tend to capture attention, the efforts of students serving the needs of others have many outlets. *Winterim* projects have been run in Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic as students travel each January to work on short term projects often in conjunction with local churches and missionaries. They build construction projects and run Bible clubs to meet identified needs. In addition to these overseas ventures, some local initiatives have begun to develop, specifically in the West Chicago backyard of the Academy. Spanish and Bible “living curriculum teacher Kim Malmquist has worked with her students in partnership with area church ministries on a program called Puente del Pueblo or *Bridge of the People*. The students run an after-school children’s program in one of the largest apartment complexes in the town which serves a largely Hispanic population. “We’re called to be neighbors to those in our own backyard. God has opened the doors for us to build an ongoing relationship with children in our community,” stated Malmquist. The goal is for the students to assist with homework and English language help and to offer friendship and support.⁶²

Least

Least is another project that occurs annually in which students interact with questions of social justice, this time through the arts. While the focus may shift each year, students have the opportunity to create anything from a poem to a video to a one act play

⁶²*Wheaton Academy Connection* 5, no. 2 (June 2009) Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

to express their interaction with these issues. Key questions centered about our responsibility to help those who are in need are catalyzed by the project's verse in Matthew 25:41-45 where Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the *least* among you, you did not do for me." Usually at least 300 students, or half the school, gets involved in some aspect of fine arts production around this theme. Recently, The Association of Christian Schools International featured the LEAST program as an Exemplary School Program in Christian School Education magazine.⁶³

Growth of Wheaton Academy's Culture of Service

Current Head of School Dr. Frost correctly identified in recent years that the Zambia project, in particular, had created a "culture of service" on campus though this researcher would argue that this call to live out one's faith through actions that seek to address the inequities in society can be traced all the way back to Jonathan Blanchard and the pioneer founders who fought so diligently against slavery. It is also a culture of service that is a natural by-product of some of the students in attendance at the Academy being from missionary families. Dr. Roth indicated in his interview that he knew of some 80 missionaries worldwide that were from Wheaton Academy in over thirty countries and many of them have sent their children back to the school for their high school education. One of the more altruistic, and perhaps famous, examples of service occurred on September 11, 2001 when one former Wheaton Academy and Wheaton College graduate by the name of Todd Beamer led a patriotic charge on hijacked United Airlines Flight 93

⁶³"Award Winning LEAST Program is a Soaring Success," November 11, 2009 retrieved on 1.22.11 from http://www.wheatonacademy.org/RelId/609097/ISvars/default/AwardWinningLEASTProgramisaSoaring_Success.htm.

against terrorism. The account by the emergency operator on the phone with him indicated that he recited the Lords' Prayer with her and then joined with his fellow passengers to overcome the hijackers, choosing to fly the plane into the ground rather than let it potentially crash into the White House. Who can forget his supposed last words, "Are you guys ready? Let's roll." Jonathan Blanchard would have been proud. These various examples are illustrations once again of the fact that the Academy's revised mission statement with its intentional nurturing student growth in and through service has born much fruit in these latter years of maturation.

Defining the Soul of Wheaton Academy as the Torch is Passed, 2006

During his interview with this researcher on December 10, 2010, Dr. Frost described some of the events which surrounded the transition of leadership from Dr. David Roth to himself. He indicated that Roth's final commencement address on June 3 of 2006 to the students in the Class of 2006 was titled, "Understanding and Protecting the Soul of Wheaton Academy." A subsequent interview with Dr. Roth verified this; Roth also provided a copy of the speech that he gave that day to be examined as an artifact for this research study. What follows is a long excerpt from the address which highlights the concern and attention he believed should be paid to protecting the essential mission and vision of this antebellum academy, a process he labeled "protecting the soul" of the academy.

...As I look out in the audience today there are parents, trustees and WA teachers who sat here for their commencement not too many years ago. Each one of them will tell you that whether they paid your tuition to attend WA, or served you in the classroom or on the Board, they did so for one reason – they believed in the Soul of the School.

In the future you may be involved with other Christian schools, as well as Wheaton Academy. It doesn't matter if it is Lexington Christian Academy in Boston, Oaks Christian School in Los Angeles, Black Forest Academy in Germany, or Wheaton Academy in Chicago. Am I suggesting that some of you may be back at WA in the future? I hope so. I extend an invitation to you to continue as a part of Wheaton Academy in whatever form that takes, whether you return to teach, send your own children here some day, send a gift to your alma mater, become WA prayer partners, visit us at Homecoming, or just send your former teachers an email occasionally to let us know how you are doing. We want to continue to be a part of your lives.

Today there are two things I want you to remember.

1. God wants us to understand the Soul of Wheaton Academy.
2. God wants us to protect the Soul of Wheaton Academy.

Most of you have heard the story of the small group of Wesleyan parents who, in 1852, knelt in the prairie grass on a knoll in Wheaton and prayed this school into existence. What you may not know is that six years later in 1858, the parents decided that the school should be closed due to finances. Then God brought Jonathan Blanchard into the picture and Wheaton Academy became a part of Wheaton College for over 100 years. Then, in 1970 the college decided to close the Academy due to financial struggles. Once again Wheaton Academy was threatened with closure. A small group of parents, believing in the Soul of the School, and wanting Christian high school education to continue here in Chicago's western suburbs, together mortgaged their houses and borrowed against their insurance policies and kept Wheaton Academy alive.

Bernie and Henrietta VanDerMolen have passed away, Charles and Janet Strobeck could not be with us today, but one person from that small group is with us today. Ed Morgan, would you please stand? He represents the legacy we want to protect. Before we talk about what exactly the Soul of a Christian school is – let me first tell you why it is important.

Years ago I met Dr. John Blanchard, former Headmaster of Wheaton Academy. I told Dr. Blanchard that my goal was to get a Master's degree in Political Science, move to Washington D.C. and work in the State Department. His sage response to me was, "If you want to affect change in society, commit your life to working with young people in the Christian school." I took his advice. I have had the opportunity to spend the last 39 years serving in Christian schools, and a wonderful thing has happened. I have seen graduates just like you, Class of 2006, who have gone on for

further education and training and are having an impact in every facet of society for Christ and His Kingdom. Former students like you are doing things here in the United States and around the world that your teachers and I could only dream of doing. And they are doing it for God's Glory alone.

The Soul of a Christian school is important because when protected, God uses it to raise up men and women who glorify God with their lives. The Soul of a Christian school is important because when it is protected something very special happens. Something more than academic education and training occurs. II Chronicles 16:9 happens. That verse says that "the eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." Not partially, not when it's convenient, but FULLY committed. In the context of that verse, God condemns the people of God for relying on their own strength. The Soul of the school is important because when it is protected we raise up a new generation who use God's power, not their own.

When the Soul of the school is protected, it becomes one of the most effective means to disciple our future leaders. God uses many tools to advance His Kingdom. He uses earthly structures like governments. How important it is to have committed Christians like Randy Hultgren (a 1984 Graduate of WA) and Peter Roskam (a current WA parent) in government. God uses families. The health of our nation depends on the health of our families. God uses the church. God has established the Church and nothing will ultimately prevail against it. However the little Christian school movement, which I like to call God's school system, is one of the most effective means to produce mature disciples of Christ. When the Soul of the school is protected, young people become disciples. Next year my role will change from being Headmaster to heading up the WA Institute. My first assignment with the WA Institute is to test the viability of building a virtual campus. That means that through a virtual campus and distance learning, Wheaton Academy may be working with not just 600 students, but 6000 students or more. Lord willing, in the near future regardless of geographic boundaries or time zones, home schools, small rural Christian schools and foreign missionary schools may have access to Wheaton Academy's curriculum. Proverbs says, "We should make plans – counting on God to direct us." Proverbs also says, "We can make our plans, but the final outcome is in God's hands." It is in the spirit of these two Proverbs that we press ahead with the Virtual Campus. As the breadth of our ministry expands, it is vitally important that we guard the Soul of the School, guard what your class exemplifies and embodies. So what is the Soul of the School? By soul I am referring to the vital core or the essential parts of the school.

Here are six questions that help define the Soul of Wheaton Academy:

1. Does everything that goes on at Wheaton Academy come under the authority of Scripture?
2. Does Wheaton Academy fully partner with the Christian home and church?
3. Can students at Wheaton Academy get a thoroughly Christian education without sacrificing excellence in academics, athletics, fine arts and other disciplines? In other words, how well are we integrating faith and learning?
4. Do Wheaton Academy teachers live the Curriculum as well as they teach it? Are they *Living Curriculum Teachers*?
5. Is Wheaton Academy a good steward of every resource God has provided?
6. In addition to being a competent administrator, does the head of school really seek to conduct the affairs of Wheaton Academy according to God's Will? Is he or she a Biblical leader? When the eyes of the Lord move to and fro through the earth, will God find at the helm of Wheaton Academy a man or woman whose heart is fully His?

Each of us who is interested in the Soul of this School must answer these six questions. We must continue to ask these questions over and over again. Wheaton Academy could be a very different school a year from now or five years from now if we don't take time to understand the Soul of the School and take steps to protect it. I do not ask these questions lightly. In 1909 Harvard shortened its motto from "Truth for Christ's Kingdom" to "Truth" – suggesting the school's increasing confidence in man's quest for truth, free of God. We do not want Wheaton Academy to become a former Christian school like Harvard and so many other schools across America.

Could that happen here? Most of us here today would say, "No way! There is no way Wheaton Academy will go the way of Harvard, not with Dr. Roth's four decades of experience, Carolyn LeMaire's 35 years, Ken Ellis, Susan Butcher, Edie Rooks, and Jon Keith's 25 years each, and not with Andy Euler's steady theological hand. God won't allow an aberration in the Academy's mission."

Guess what? Times change. People come and go. A number of new teachers are joining our faculty. Andy is moving on to Covenant College next year. I am going to be working on building a Virtual Campus. The current faculty will not be here forever.

I am not yelling “Fire!” I am saying, “Be vigilant!” Understand the Soul of the School. Protect the Soul of the School. I am asking you, Class of 2006, to stay engaged with Wheaton Academy. Get registered online with WA’s Alumni Community. Some of you have made friends for life here at the Academy. Cultivate those friendships through the alumni pages on our Wheaton Academy web site. Support the Academy with your gifts. Remember Christ looks at the heart of the giver not the amount of the gift. Pray for the students, the teachers, the families and the trustees. Prayer is the most powerful thing you can do to protect the Soul of the Academy. Graduates, as you pray for us, know that we are praying for you.

Parents, as you know, parenting doesn’t stop at graduation. Pray for your child every day, and be a loving referent to them. The statistics regarding Christian college students struggling in their faith are not encouraging. This is spiritual warfare. Graduates, *when*—not if, but *when*—you struggle as a believer during your college years, call or e-mail one of these teachers or your parents. That is what Christian parents and friends are for.

My interest in engaging your support in protecting the Soul of the School is for next year’s student body and the student body the next year, and the next, and the next. The goal for Wheaton Academy is to provide Christian education for generations to come—your children and my children’s children. Caleb, Calla, are you listening to Grandpa speak? Graduates, I am asking you to help me ensure that future generations of Wheaton Academy seniors will be celebrating true Christian education just as you have.

The late, long-time headmaster of Stony Brook School in New York, Frank Gaebelein, once said, “The old spiritual ‘Everybody talkin’ ‘bout heav’n ain’t goin’ there,’” might be paraphrased, “Everybody talkin’ ‘bout Christian education ain’t doin’ it.” We are doin’ Christian education at Wheaton Academy, but if we are going to keep doing it, and if we are going to do it better, we must protect the Soul of the School.

Class of 2006, as Wheaton Academy has cared for you, I charge you now to become involved in protecting the Soul of this School. Help us stay focused on, and hold us accountable for, the following four commitments:

1. *We will keep Wheaton Academy's spiritual compass on God and His Word.* Only as this book, the Bible, remains the key textbook at Wheaton Academy will its graduates develop a Biblical worldview. Only if we are obedient and faithful to God and His Word will He continue to bless the Academy.
2. *We will keep the focus of Wheaton Academy on Jesus' model of growth.* Luke 2:52 says, "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." Wheaton Academy's mission is to nurture growth through relationships, excellence, and service to the glory of God. Over the last four years we have sought to help you become mature disciples of Christ, equipped for college and for life.
3. *We commit Wheaton Academy to partner with the home and the church.* We like parents. Parents are welcome partners at Wheaton Academy. We want to complement what Christian parents are seeking to do in the home. We support the church. The church provides us with spiritual fellowship and Biblical instruction. The Academy complements that with additional fellowship and instruction and the opportunity to explore and exercise students' God-given gifts and abilities.
4. *We will hire and retain Living Curriculum teachers, coaches, and staff.* The most compelling argument for the Christian school is that it surrounds the student with godly role models. Class of 2006, how different would your lives be without the influence of people such as Chip Huber, Jack Burgess, the Hocketts, the Buricks, Matt Dominguez, and so many others? Godly role models are important because of a principle found in Luke 6:40: "Everyone fully trained will be like his teacher." Scripture says a student will become like the teacher, not the textbook or the school – the TEACHER!

Graduates, as we say good-bye to you and celebrate all that you have done and become, I affirm with the Psalmist, "Lord, all that we have accomplished, YOU have done for us." Class of 2006, Families, Friends, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Trustees, and Mr. Keith, commit with me to protect the Soul of this School—the soul of Wheaton Academy. *Soli Deo Gloria!*⁶⁴

⁶⁴Dr. David Roth, "Understanding and Protecting the Soul of Wheaton Academy," June 3, 2006, final commencement address to the students in the Class of 2006, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL.

During his interview December 10, 2010 with this researcher, Dr. Frost pulled a worn card entitled, “Defining the Soul of Wheaton Academy” out of his wallet; it was a card that Dr. Roth had given to him during this transition time. The card, often referred to by Dr. Frost in the months and years that followed the torch passing from Roth to Frost, contained the six questions outlined in the commencement speech delivered on that day in early June in 2006. Questions that he understood were reminding him of his mandate to ensure the continuance of the mission of this Academy begun so many years before.⁶⁵

Reviewing the commencement address through the lens of this dissertation’s framework reveals so many of the critical attributes of organizations, especially schools that are able to maintain their original vision. The speech includes a reminder of the organizational saga including references to “the grassy knoll” story and those early founders who began in prayer. It references the multiple occasions throughout its history when financial challenges nearly shut its doors, but for the heroic efforts of persistent parents and alumni who figuratively and metaphorically mortgaged their futures so that Wheaton Academy would have one of its own. Roth reminded his audience of the compelling Christian mission or vision that fuels the reason for the school’s existence and supports it with a Biblical basis. He reminds all of the importance of the involvement of all the stakeholders: students, alumni, parents, teachers, and administrators. He clearly articulates their intent to continue the hiring of “Living Curriculum Teachers,” those who

⁶⁵Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

walk the talk and give example of their faith through their behaviors and practices. He also identifies the need for Wheaton to look outside of its confines to share its vision with the rest of the world. The elements of this researcher's framework are found in this very fitting speech to end his time, heading up the Academy, even as anticipation mounts for what will come next.

Dr. Gene Frost, 2006

In 2006, Dr. Gene Frost was named Head of School and though that was a new role for him, it by no means was his first introduction to Wheaton Academy or the Wheaton milieu, for that matter. As he reported in an interview with this researcher on December 10, 2010, "My parents were committed to Christian education so I started in first grade at Wheaton Christian Grammar School, followed on at Wheaton Academy, was admitted to Brown University and Wheaton College. My parents said I could go anywhere I wanted, but they were only going to pay for a Christian school. So I went on to Wheaton College, which I'm glad for. And so I was a student at Wheaton Academy, starting in 1967 and graduated in '71. I was at the college from '71 to '75."⁶⁶ He reported that early on "I had wanted to be a Bible teacher in high school. I had been shaped by my high school experience more than my elementary or college. And I felt like that's the place I connected with that."⁶⁷ After graduating from Wheaton College, he attended Northern Baptist Seminary with the goal of becoming a youth pastor and Bible teacher, teaching part time at Wheaton Academy for two years during that period. His last year

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

was spent at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis. Following this educational preparation and related internships, he applied for and was hired by the Academy in 1989 where he spent the next five years as a Bible teacher. In 1994, in order to secure the flexible time and much needed resources to support the pursuit of finishing his doctorate degree, Frost accepted his brother-in-law's invitation to help him build his business. His original plan was to work for three to five years, but it was twenty-two years before Frost actually returned to work in education. Frost was never far from Wheaton Academy, however, for he served on the Board of Trustees almost continuously from roughly 1987 to 2006. Frost related that the Academy "was really a failing school at the time, with declining enrollment, a growing deficit, crumbling buildings."⁶⁸ It was an important time of service for Frost who learned from this internal position about the challenges that threatened the very survival of the Academy and the important decisions that would be made to help it emerge stronger and ready to confront the challenges of the 21st century. As he thought about what turned around the school he stated, "We attracted some great Board members, and we really reconstituted the school. And the school was reconstituted around the mission, the students to relationships, excellence and service. All to the Glory of God. We secured David Roth as a leader of integrity. And we set out to find the greatest teachers in the world. And fired a third of the faculty the second year. And the other third left within two years. So we really only had the top third of the teachers we started with, and we kept hiring in great teachers over the next 20 years."⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

While in 2006, Frost was named Head of School, it was a not a position he had initially sought. The year before he had decided to leave the business world and hoped to teach at Wheaton College in their Spiritual Formation Department. During that time, he was also serving on the search committee seeking a replacement for Dr. David Roth. The committee, working with a professional search firm, narrowed a field of nearly 45 names down to a candidate they believed to be a perfect fit for the Academy, however, the candidate ceased to be a viable candidate in late spring. About that same time Frost was in final stages of interviewing for the college position only to learn that the College had decided not to fund the position. As Frost related with a touch of humor, “So my job went away and our candidate went away. Then the chairman of the Academy search committee and the chairman of the Board both approached me and said, ‘Do you see any providence in this series of circumstances?’” Clearly he now believes this was part of God’s plan for him. He was in the final stages of writing a book on “how to run a great Christian school”⁷⁰ and now had the chance to put into practice what he had learned from his years on the Board and his study of a half dozen successful Christian schools across the country.

Frost’s Learning from the Best

In 2007, Dr. Frost’s book *Learning from the Best: Growing Greatness in the Christian Schools* attempted to answer the question he posed, “What does it take to become a ‘great school,’ and more specifically, a ‘great Christian secondary school?’”⁷¹

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Gene Frost, *Learning from the Best*, 12.

To answer that question, Frost organized a research team schooled in Jim Collin's *Good to Great* principles to study, conduct surveys, and interview leaders from twelve schools with an enrollment over 300 who "exemplified qualities of greatness in the eyes of their sponsoring association."⁷² Wheaton Academy was of seven of those schools studied under a more comprehensive lens. By looking at this particular text, one can get a jumpstart on understanding the driving philosophy of author Dr. Gene Frost, the Academy's current Head of School. A distillation of his book reveals that he values and has identified the following characteristics of great schools and the individuals that lead them: (1) Christian Concept of Servant Leadership is one who Christlike "builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will."⁷³ (2) Senior leaders are grown from within by these servant leaders in what Collins calls "setting up successors for success"⁷⁴ (3) "Great leaders know they cannot run a great school unless they "find the right people and put them in the right positions."⁷⁵ "The Christian school...will never be any better than its teachers and staff and must dedicate some resources routinely to recruit the best possible faculty."⁷⁶ (4) Great schools are not afraid to honestly confront brutal facts that are at the heart of their difficulties and have built in "red-flag mechanisms" to help them "turn information into "impossible-to-ignore

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 19.

⁷⁴Ibid., 23.

⁷⁵Ibid., 25.

⁷⁶Ibid., 26-27.

information.”⁷⁷ (5) Collins’ Hedgehog concept means that Christian schools must keep their passions centered on their mission and align their resources to support it appropriately.⁷⁸ (6) Great schools have utilized “accelerators of success” such as dedicated curriculum development, college guidance services, and focused parent involvement strategies to push them toward excellence,⁷⁹ and (7) Great Schools know the importance and “power of doing the right things the right way consistently over time,”⁸⁰ which is akin to Collins’ Flywheel construct. Frost’s research confirmed that defining and building consensus around a solid mission and vision is at the foundation of the successful Christian schools that he and his team studied. This understanding informed his opinion about the Academy and the legacy left to it by the College.

Gene’s research into Collin’s work has led him to understand and reflect on leadership and the different types of leaders and how they may or may not fit the needs of a school at a particular point in time. He paid tribute to his predecessor, David Roth, as being a Level 5 leader “who gives away all the credit and takes all the blame. David did that naturally,” he said, “and that’s why you trusted him. It wasn’t about him; it was always about the institution. He brought credibility which was not here prior to his coming. Before David, it was every man for himself and a lot of finger-pointing. David had twenty years of credibility at the grammar school and he came in here and he was the same person doing what needed to be done, for seventeen years putting one foot in front

⁷⁷Ibid., 35.

⁷⁸Ibid., 39.

⁷⁹Ibid., 51.

⁸⁰Ibid., 55.

of the other, doing the right thing the right way and everybody was able to rely on that. That's Level 5 Leadership."⁸¹ That kind of leadership is exactly what the Academy needed in 1989 and his leadership coupled with Keith's and complimented by Frost's Board direction is what helped to rebuild the school.

Frost's self-analysis is that he could never have done the job accomplished by Roth; he sees himself as more of a change agent. Jon Keith, when asked by this researcher, agreed with Frost's assessment of Roth and went on to say of Frost that he is "an enthusiastic, insatiable, visionary type. Just constantly dreaming, thinking, creating...a real idea generator. He personifies the college president who fulfills the CEO role of an organization."⁸² Just as Roth was the perfect leader for building trust and helping the school recover its soul, it would seem that Gene Frost is the right individual to take it on the next leg of its journey.

Abolishment of the Wheaton Academy Corporation

One of the changes that Gene implemented after two years in the position was to bring a proposal to the Board to change its very nature. Up until 2009, parents and friends of the Academy were invited each year to participate in what was called The Wheaton Academy Corporation. The by-laws stated that any person desirous of membership simply had to pay a minimum of \$25.00 to the school, make written application for membership and subscribe to the *Statement of Faith*. Once accepted as a member, the individual was able to elect Trustees, approve the annual budget, approve amendments to

⁸¹Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

⁸²Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

the Articles of Incorporation, and approve the sale or encumbrance of any substantial portion of the assets of the school or its dissolution. The corporation met twice a year and was the legal governing body of the school. This researcher joined and attended such a meeting in 2008 and found herself to be the sole person in attendance, which she learned was typical. Gene Frost, in conversation with this researcher, indicated that he worked to get the by-laws changed the next year, so that no longer would this kind of membership be allowed. The Board became a self-perpetuating Board with Board members who would be able to make decisions without fear of an outside group of dissidents disrupting the pursuit of the mission of the school, should such a group organize. He told this researcher that he and the Board added one “poison pill” to further solidify the maintenance of the original mission by “adding a requirement that the doctrinal statement [*Statement of Faith*] can never be changed and that the Board must subscribe to it every year. If either of those requirements is not met, then everything reverts back to Wheaton College.”⁸³ He went on to say that the Academy has not lost sight of its mission because of individuals who were committed to the orthodoxy of evangelical Christianity, but it was only as good as the individuals involved. This change came about because at the Board level they asked, “Can we institutionally do something that will not allow any one individual or group of individuals to change their mind or get another idea or be pressured by economic circumstances to make compromises? So we thought we should put something in here that would keep the mission centered on orthodox theology. Even

⁸³Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

if we have a good Board now, we don't know what the Board is going to look like in 25 years. We do know that this will require adherence to the Evangelical doctrinal statement and I think that's going to keep the mission statement intact."⁸⁴ Frost went on to explain that the Board still served two, four-year terms with the requirement of sitting out for one year before serving another set of terms. "It's a self-perpetuating Board in that it has a committee that is responsible for soliciting, finding, recruiting and training new Board members."⁸⁵

In that way, those in charge of the mission can select their successors to ensure the continuity of the cathedral building.

October 2007 *Transforming Every Student:*

The Campaign for Wheaton Academy

One important requirement for Frost in his capacity as Head of School is to continue to build financial capacity to enable the school to reach its potential as outlined by the mission statement. One of his first campaigns began in October of 2007 when Wheaton Academy and Friends packed the Warrior Dome (student gymnasium) on October 30, 2007 to kick off the public phase of *Transforming Every Student: The Campaign for Wheaton Academy*, a fundraising campaign to raise \$12.8 million to include: \$8.6 million to build a new Field House; \$1.6 million to create an employee endowment that can support a more competitive salary schedule to attract and provide for the Academy's "living curriculum teachers;" \$1.8 million to provide for three year's

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

worth of scholarships for students who otherwise would not be able to attend the Academy; and \$800,00 to cover ongoing infrastructure costs such as equipment, parking, contingencies, and other related expenses.

That evening in the warrior dome, attendees were informed that the largest single gift in the school's then 154 year history, totally \$2.85 million, had been committed to the campaign by a single donor who wished to remain anonymous. "To honor the legacy of the donor, whose mother attended the Academy, and to honor the thousands of alumni and families that span the long history, the new field house was to be named the Heritage Field House."⁸⁶ In addition to this donation, an additional anonymous donor pledged a \$1 million challenge grant for pledges received in the next three months. By the time the campaign concluded July 31, 2010, a total of \$11.6 million had been raised from contributions by over 1,000 donors.⁸⁷

Heritage Field House Prayer Walk, 2008

It was not the first time that families had gathered to pray on the site of future construction in this school's history. One thinks back to 1853 when, as it has been told so often, parents gathered to pray to God for the future of the school that would be built on the site, a school that was first called the Illinois Institute and later became Wheaton College and Wheaton College Academy. One hundred fifty-five years later at the Academy, the extended family was invited to a 6:30 p.m. October 21 *Prayer Walk and Preview Night* for the under construction Heritage Field House at the construction site

⁸⁶Wheaton Academy Connection 4, no. 1 (February 2008) Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

⁸⁷Wheaton Academy 2009-10 Annual Report, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, 2010.

next to the existing Warrior Dome. Several hundred people met to pray and to write “a message of scripture and blessing on the foundation of the new facility” that would serve generations to come.⁸⁸

Heritage Project, 2009

With heritage on the mind, Homecoming 2009 was the date for the initiation of a new project focusing on capturing the stories of Wheaton Academy/Wheaton Christian High School alumni throughout the years. The focus of the Heritage Project is to collect the stories of how God used the Academy in the lives of alumni, faculty, staff, and families. The goal of this project is to create an organizational archive as well as publish some of the testimonies in a book. Burton Clarke would have recognized the importance of such a project for the way in which it encourages all members of the community to contribute to the organizational saga and to celebrate the long storied past of the Academy and its mission and their role in it.

Intentional Enrollment and Screening of Student Applicants

One of the luxuries for the Academy with their recent successes is that they now have more applicants than they probably will choose to admit. Unlike public schools, private schools in this type of situation can more intentionally make choices about who they will and will not admit to the school in order to ensure that the mission of the school continues unabated. This researcher’s interview with Jon Keith revealed his opinion that Wheaton’s current success has given them the luxury now of “intentionally enrolling a

⁸⁸Wheaton Academy October flyer, “Laying a Foundation of Prayer,” Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, 2008.

certain kind of student.”⁸⁹ Though he is now the Chief Operating Officer of the Academy and not the principal of the school, he has retained many of the personnel or human relations aspects in his job description and keeps involved in the hiring practices and interviewing of prospective students. He described a new metric he developed to ensure that the student body would align to and support the mission of the school while still allowing some flexibility for those students who had not yet matured, but with this environment, it was likely they would turn around. He provided a brief summary of the process in which the students’ family was rated in categories such as spiritual motivation, support of academics, and participatory impact on the community. Families were measured against a rubric which detailed at one end descriptors such as: Biblically guided, expecting a Christian education for child, participating in church and community, and so on to the other end where the lack of these things were obvious. Jon Keith said that the Academy goal was to have 80% of its families receive top marks in all categories, 10% almost reach that level, 5% marginally participating and 5% at least open to the ideas. He believed this would produce a “controlled mix of the school so that most likely nine out of ten kids in the school would do the right thing and have a great influence over the one kid, the small minority, who wasn’t yet there.” Jon’s estimation was that even in the 1990’s only 1/3 of the students were mature, though the application process begun back then started to address this alignment issue.⁹⁰ When a private school can match students who are open to the possibilities of their mission under the guidance

⁸⁹Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

⁹⁰Ibid.

of “living curriculum teachers,” the potential for growth and accomplishment is unlimited. Once a family has students that are enrolled and succeeding because of this alignment, they are more likely to want that for their younger children as well. One of the likely ways to support the sustenance of mission over the generations is to include legacy students or those whose siblings, fathers and grandfathers may have attended. Jon Keith has started looking more closely at the data related to this issue starting with the class of 2014. He noted that 44% have had at least one parent, grandparent, or sibling who attended the Academy at some time in the past.

International Student Program Increases Global Awareness, 2008

Jon Keith explained that having reached a certain level of success has freed the leadership team to engage in some reflection about what the future should look like at the Academy. Recent conversations revolved around how they might best equip students for the skills they would need to be global citizens. He described how Wheaton, which had avoided boarding school status for nearly forty years, had recently initiated a program that invited international students to enroll; instead of dorms, students are “boarding” with families or with teachers. He shared the example of a young girl from South Korea who brings to her A.P. Comparative Government class a sensitivity, relative to the current North Korea-South Korea hostilities, more real than any textbook discussion. He believes this is helping the Academy community to begin thinking about what a global Christian school looks like. Brenda Vishanoff, Director of Admissions and Boarding, stated in the Wheaton Academy *Connection*, February 2010 that “We want WA students to become multi-cultural and to think more globally. The world in which today’s

graduates will live is very interconnected. As we serve the international student, we also want our local students to be globally competent and ready for college.”⁹¹ The community of international students has been named KAIROS and in February of 2010 had students from twelve countries and missionary kids. Once a month they meet with WA students and faculty for dinner to discuss cross-cultural issues and challenges as they seek to grow spiritually. Starting with three students, by 2010 the group numbered 15 with 30 anticipated in 2011. The students board in homes of teachers or WA families to have a full immersion experience and the opportunity to build lasting relationships. This program along with numerous mission trips, the Zambia project, and new programs like the International Café have helped to make Wheaton Academy more aware of poverty and social injustice around the world. Jon Keith added, “We are incredibly excited about the emerging International Student Program and all that it represents as Wheaton Academy continues to produce globally minded followers of Christ.”⁹²

January Retreat, a Time of Organizational Reflection and Visioning, 2011

Every January, Jon Keith, Gene Frost, and Steve Bult head to Florida to spend four days together planning for Wheaton Academy’s future. Steve is currently the principal of Wheaton Academy and is being groomed ever so carefully to perhaps succeed Gene Frost in the future. This year’s agenda included two areas to explore: external and internal. The first question they hoped to address was to examine how the Academy, now rich with so many talents, could use that platform to help others,

⁹¹*Wheaton Academy Connection* 6, no, 1 (February 2010), Wheaton Academy Archives, West Chicago, IL.

⁹²Ibid.

especially in the Christian school movement. How can Wheaton convince other schools around the world to embrace their formula, to move to an AND philosophy as opposed to an OR philosophy? How can Wheaton educators reach out and be educators of influence? One answer Jon shared they were exploring more fully was a recently organized group of twenty schools who were invested in developing and offering *Winterim* programs. Jon Keith was the first president of this group called the Christian Coalition for Educational Innovation or CCEI; they had already built a curriculum bank to share with each other and hoped to go national. Jon also referenced the opportunities the Academy now had to share their best practices with non Christian schools, even those from around the world. During his interview with this researcher, he recounted the visit of some Chinese visitors hosted by Northwestern University who were touring some of America's finest schools in order to understand principles of education that had allowed America to excel and innovate over the years.⁹³ What was to be scheduled as a brief stop at the Academy turned into a meeting that stretched through the day and into the evening hours as this group of non Christian Chinese businessmen sought to understand the "formula" for success at the Academy. What they could not get over was the concept of using the teacher as an "accelerant to change the learning process." In the end they said to Jon: "Listen, are you out of your mind? You have a secret formula. And we have a billion and a half people...and you're only using this on 600. What is wrong with you? We've been trying to memorize things for 500 years and it hasn't been working. There's no

⁹³Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

correlation between our high achieving students and our high impact people in our society. We know western education as seen here in the United States has produced 70-80% of the world's inventions and innovations in the last 100 years. So we know this system of education is doing something that we are not. But we've never seen this [meaning what was going on at Wheaton Academy] before."⁹⁴ Jon Keith went on to talk about the role the Academy could have in sharing what it has learned. He also talked about the fact that recently they had realized that growing the Academy to much larger than 600 was not a good thing. In the last couple of years, the Academy had been allowed to reach 640, 645, 650 and what he had noticed was that the administrators did not know everybody—students and parents—as they had in the past. He said, “We ignored our own beliefs and our own research that indicated the best schools are about 400 to 600 students. That number gives you all the advantages of a big school without the negatives.”⁹⁵ A decision was made around 2009 to cap the student enrollment, moving gradually back to around 600 students so that their original mission of personalizing education could still be maintained. Jon believes that they can still address the international community with their message, while focused on what is working with just 600 students.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

The Work Still to Be Done

This researcher asked Gene Frost what he hoped to accomplish before he passed on his responsibilities to another Head of School. His response was at first “well, maybe just continue the mission. Keep attracting the best and brightest teachers, who will then inspire and make good things happen.”⁹⁶ As the conversation continued, he outlined some specifics that involved: 1) finding the financial resources to complete the campus facility needs of additional and rehabbed science labs; 2) investigate the possibility of building a football stadium and track to be co-owned and used with St. Francis High School in Wheaton; 3) explore developing a junior college to operate in the evening; 4) develop the Academy Institute which would be for Christian school teachers to help other Christian schools implement the best practices developed at the Academy. The real challenge identified by Gene Frost toward the end of his interview was simply stated: “Where is this place going now that we’ve arrived at where we thought we were going? So now what’s next? We need to think about that and make some decisions. That is something I’d like to see done before I leave.”⁹⁷ Could it be that the cathedral imagined over 157 years ago is in fact nearly built?

⁹⁶Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

⁹⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER IX

ANALYSIS OF THE FULFILLMENT OF THE VISION:

THE ACADEMY FROM 1989 TO 2011

It is not uncommon for parents of twenty-somethings, particularly those who have ended up at home after college, to finally heave a sigh of relief when their children finally and successfully cross over the bridge to independence. They are proud to see them settled, beginning careers they enjoy, earning their first paychecks, finding mates, starting families, and making decisions on their own. This is not unlike the turning point that occurs in 1989 when David Roth partners with Jon Keith to start a new chapter in the life of the Academy. It must have been a relief to the College to finally see its sometime child finally on the right path. Reviewing these last twenty-two years of maturation, it is remarkable how far the school has come and how bright the future is that lies before it as it continues to fulfill the vision established so many years ago in 1853.

Obviously, the first important step in this transformation was “getting the right people on the bus,” as Gene Frost is fond of saying in quoting the work of Jim Collins. David Roth was all of that and more. He had decades of administrative experience, including just enough of a taste of eastern prep schools to know what he wanted to include and what he did not in this Midwestern private Christian school. His experience and personality enabled him to have a “steady as she goes” mentality and not be easily rattled, and that was important given all that was not right with this organization in 1988.

He had past connections with key Board members and families who desperately wanted him to be there and were willing to help him with their resources and support. He also understood his parent/customer base as he had led the grammar school families, many of whom sent their children to the high school or would consider doing so now that he was in charge. They trusted him and his vision of what could be, even though it seemed an impossibility in 1989. What may be overlooked is what a good complement Roth was for Jon Keith and his talents. Jon was a systems thinker, a teller of “unvarnished truths” as he himself has indicated to this researcher. Roth, the executor of many of Keith’s ideas as well as his own, gave those truths an elegant turn, in much the same way he took Keith’s “non-negotiables” and spun them into the more enticing “Wheaton Immutables.” He was able to capture, in his chapel addresses, the poetry necessary to inspire and build loyalty and trust. Perhaps most important, however, was that he believed, like Blanchard before him, that he was called to take this position. His head and heart were in the right place and “prayer warrior” that he was, as Keith refers to him, he was in it for the long haul. The turnover in headmasters of the school was at an end.

The beauty of this arrangement during the first seventeen years is that what Roth lacked, Keith and Frost both could supply. Jon Keith wore many hats in his time at the Academy, was employed there prior to David Roth, and so understood the institution inside and out—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Because he was a systems thinker, he used his numbers acumen to the advantage of the Academy, for analysis of trends and initiatives in more creative ways than most. Like David Roth, he, too, felt originally called to work in a school that needed him and God’s miraculous hand to transform it

from the inside out. Though he felt called, in this researcher's opinion, he was exhausted initially by eight years of the chaos, but to David's credit and persuasive powers—and Board member Ed Morgan, says Keith—he was convinced to stay as partner on this mission.

With all that chaos, where is the best place to start? As Jon Keith related to this researcher, they started working on the four P's: first philosophy, then articulate it with people, and then programs and the place (the facility) will take care of themselves.¹ Thus the reconstitution of the Academy, as Frost calls it, began with a reexamination of its mission, its vision...the identity questions. These questions had clear answers during the first phase of life of the Academy when under the wing of the College, but somewhere along the way after the move to Prince Crossing Road, those in charge lost their way...or there were so many who passed through the revolving door of leading the Academy that the message lost something in translation. So the “we're staying in this room until we get this mission statement written” meeting was one of the most critical events in these last chapters of the story. The growth model mission statement that emerged—including the three pillars of relationships, excellence, service—was masterful in that it honored the past, but also made room for the future. The mission statement was the beginning touchstone upon which everything and everyone else could and would be measured. First, it became the principles by which teachers were evaluated, retained or let go, recruited and hired. Unlike public schools shackled by tenure laws and teacher union restrictions, private schools have the luxury of building their communities in alignment

¹Mr. Jon Keith, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy, West Chicago, IL, January 7, 2011.

with their beliefs if they are courageous enough to do so. The second critical episode in this drama—the napkin incident—opened all eyes to what must be done to continue to “get the right people on the bus.” Jon Keith underscored an important idea with this researcher when he said that in his experience he believes schools get off track when they delegate their philosophy formation and care “down the organization.”² Wheaton Academy makes a point of not doing that now. They try to hire great people who are the mission statement, but they do not let them revise it.

Keith, Roth, and Frost all recognized the critical importance of developing a quality teaching staff and that the *Immutables*, the next important articulation of beliefs and philosophy, rightly placed a value on hiring and developing “living curriculum teachers” who would be impactful. Keith’s “double-teamers” approach to teacher quality analysis and the resulting change it had on hiring practices was critical as an “accelerant” in helping the school on its journey to fulfill its mission.³ Hiring individuals like Chip Huber, for example, and creating a position for him because of his potential, paid off dividends with the eventual development of the Zambia project, Project Moyo, LEAST, and other venues for students to become aware and active participants in social justice initiatives. How true it is that if a school can acquire and hold on to quality staff, the rest of the issues—program development, behavioral and discipline issues—take care of themselves! Winterim was another example that, while an idea from Keith’s past that Roth developed, provided a venue for “living curriculum teachers” to creatively find

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

ways to develop relationships with students and reach their unique interests and passions. The success of these programs has added to the reputation of the school which in turn attracts high quality teachers, more students, and families and with that a better financial base naturally is built. The spiral that had been downwardly descending in the middle phase of the life of the school at last had an upward trend line of enrollment and gifts and donations.

It would be easier for an institution to become arrogant in its newfound success, but David Roth's humility and deeply authentic Christian faith reminded all in his transformation of "for Christ and His Kingdom" to "*Soli Deo Gloria*" that this was not about them, it was about their God and His plan for the school and its mission. Their confidence in this plan was evident in many of the chapel addresses artfully delivered by both Keith and Frost over the years, but especially in the mid 1990s when it was time to commemorate the school's 140th birthday and 150th birthday. Usually each speech included the ingredients Burton Clarke identified as important for organizational sagas and Robert Benne pointed to for sustaining identities: references to the grassy knoll story, recitations of the important past events in their history together, symbols aplenty, and urgent Christian calls to action to participate now in reaching out to those in need in accordance with God's will. Of particular symbolic importance was the occasion on which Roth announced the school would be reclaiming its former name *Wheaton Academy*. Twenty-five years had passed since the group of dedicated parents, led by parent and Board Member Chuck Strobeck, had mustered together their resources to

rescue the school and with the recent successful years, it had a right to reclaim its very special heritage and reputation, and yes, its name.

There were still a few bumps in the road, however, and though it may today be seen as a small blip on the radar, the investment in the New Era Foundation was one that nearly threatened to undo much of the school's progress. Fundraising has been and will always be an issue for this and other private schools. Unfortunately, it is not possible to be a headmaster without also embracing the need to look for financial support from alumni, from parents, from foundations, from anyone who might possibly contribute. Those headmasters who do not see this as their strength should probably either consider taking a different position in the organization or if they have the resources to handle it, hire someone who is directly responsible for development. Increasing the endowment and the financial base of the institution ironically requires the spending of money. Those who can be persuaded to contribute want to be assured that the school is growing and prospering which often requires the spending of that money to improve or build facilities and accommodate the needs of a more educated and forward looking set of families. It is a balancing act that requires a mixture of courage to act with faith in one's God that the money will come in to the coffers in the end. Many of the donations must be developed from relationships with those in a position to give or who might be persuaded to leave a substantial portion of their estate to support the school upon their death. It seemed that Keith was good at the individual connections, but Frost was especially masterful at closing the deals. That the most recent campaign raised over 11 million dollars for a school of fewer than 600 families is most remarkable and has provided for the future.

There was something for everyone in that campaign package: a physical building that can be pointed to especially to those anonymous big donors, an endowment fund to support the continued hiring of “living curriculum teachers,” and scholarship money to ensure that those deserving of a spot at Wheaton Academy could come regardless of their families’ modest incomes. As the school is moving to become more intentional about screening students and their families for their alignment to the mission of the school, it is critical to remove the economic pressure often felt by the Academy in the past. Running this type of campaign more matches the skill set of Gene Frost than his counterparts whose gifts are in other areas which going forward is a good thing as there are, in his mind and the Board’s, still parts of the campus to complete. As Keith said of Frost, “he’s a people person, a relational force, Mr. External ...he’s what you would imagine as the perfect college president.”⁴ David Roth’s passing of the torch speech to Gene Frost was filled with the communal call to protect the age old mission even as, under new leadership, the goal was to move forward together. It was a message that resonated with Gene who carries close to him the wallet card of the speech’s six questions to this day. Keeping the mission intact is of central importance to Frost who made sure in the rewrite of the by-laws that even when he had moved on, the school’s Board would be constrained to follow the age old statement of faith under pain of losing it all back to the College. He, Roth, and Keith were smart enough, too, to make the development of the alumni association and its varied activities, including the Heritage Project, of prime importance. Capturing the alumni stories further strengthens not only the financial resources but the

⁴Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

interconnections between the organizational saga and their own personal life stories, giving them ownership of this treasured investment.

Beyond the physical signs of success that are everywhere in evidence on the campus, what is most persuasive about its coming of age is seen in the ethos, the behaviors and practices of all community members. The pledge, or Standards of Conduct, is still present but seems to be a background piece rather than an “in your face” document from a black and white disciplinary force. This researcher suspects that students who are engaged in authentic real life social justice missions do not fall prey as often to mischief making and the new applicant screening procedures have, for the most part, avoided admitting students with rebellious hearts and minds, though they’ll always be a few. These activist projects that seem to be taking on a life of their own are the most impressive signs of the Academy’s coming to age. They are not attached to certain teachers or personalities, for Chip Huber, for example, has been gone for several years. They are self-perpetuating instead from the desire of the students themselves, guided by any number of these so called “double teamers.” They are reaching out to others less fortunate than themselves in ways that really echo the intent of Jonathan Blanchard and the founders, and that is exciting to witness. The projects have appropriately blossomed to include a more local outreach as well, for it is not always “about going halfway around the world to save the heathens,” as many have caricatured those with a heart for missions.

There are as many definitions for “social justice” as there are individuals offering opinions about the definition. One general rendition is that it calls for us to pay attention to the “fair distribution of advantages, assets, and benefits among all members of a

society.”⁵ Certainly, an examination of the long history of Wheaton Academy can point to the origins of an organizational mindset bent on righting the inequities of the world. It began with sixty-five years of the Blanchards with eyes focused on trying to create a more “perfect society” or at least a society in which evil was restrained until the Lord would come. It occurred through their unflinching resolve to eradicate slavery, drunkenness, and the ills deriving from secret societies. Theirs was a Christianity that lived out its beliefs in action whether locally when students traveled into Chicago to assist with those impacted by the Great Fire of Chicago in 1871 or on foreign fields through its emphasis on missions and the ministry. Gene Frost offered his ideas on the subject when interviewed in early December, sharing his view that the evangelical world has only in the last decade awakened to its responsibility to get actively involved in bringing solutions to local and international problems. He referenced Bono’s platform focused on the AIDS pandemic as a reality check for many Christians who suddenly realized that active compassion is a “way to preach the gospel. That it is a way to make a difference. This was a change for, as he said, the “Evangelical Church was somewhat on the defensive in the ‘50s and ‘60s, kind of trying to hold on in the face of the liberal onslaught. And social justice was all about liberalism and abandonment of the gospel at that time in their minds. I know my parents grew up that way.”⁶ But this is not the case

⁵Maverick Teacher’s Resources, “Social Justice,” www.glenbow.org/mavericks/teacher/english/thm_poli/glossary.html (accessed January, 2010).

⁶Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

today as can be attested by looking at the numerous initiatives underway on the Academy campus.

The next chapter that is just starting to be written about this school and its mission is being discussed now by Gene Frost, Jon Keith, Steve Bult, and the Board. How can a school that has overcome so much help other Christian schools in similar situations succeed? How can the Academy students be equipped for this increasingly global, international world? How can a school intent on staying with an enrollment of about 600 students, impact populations of 600,000 and more? There is admittedly exciting work still to be done, but this antebellum Academy now knows who it is and what it is capable of accomplishing all for the glory of their God or as David Roth says, “*Soli Deo Gloria.*”

CHAPTER X

ANSWERS TO THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Even though the answers to this dissertation's eight research questions are embedded throughout the entire paper itself, it may be helpful to the reader to provide some final remarks for each of these questions as this study draws to a close.

These remarks are not meant to be exhaustive, for the main body of the dissertation presents the details useful in addressing these questions. Instead these will be summative comments that are reminders of what has been earlier discussed in greater detail.

1) What was the original vision for the Academy?

The founding families' original vision for the Academy was to provide their children with "a school that taught the principles they prized," principles which had been instilled in them at home and in church. The principles included the abolition of slavery and masonic organizations and any practices which hindered the causes of justice and equality, coupled with the upholding of moral and ethical values and behaviors in line with their orthodox Christian belief system.

2) In what ways can this vision be defined as a Christian vision of social justice?

While Jonathan Blanchard's vision was in alignment with the original founding families, his unquenchable need to move the vision into action, to perfect the world and all its ills "for Christ and His Kingdom" certainly brought it to a level of reform befitting the label of "social justice." Both Jonathan and his son Charles spent a total of sixty-five

years, intent on transformative work to not only spread their religious beliefs to all people, but to eradicate the inequities experienced by those who were enslaved by poverty, race, as well as words.

3) To what extent has it been maintained or altered throughout its history?

One change occurred early as the slavery question—at least in its overt form—was solved by the resolution of the Civil War. Charles focused, then, on the anti-masonic aspects that were also of concern during his father's tenure. One could point to the periods of time when the College and/or the Academy were more inwardly focused, such as the 1950s when historically there was less of a drive to attend to social ills. But in general, it does not appear that the vision ever really was lost or altered to a significant extent. Certainly the vision of students who began the Zambia Project in 2002 were operating very much in the spirit of the Blanchards, addressing the physical and social needs of a disadvantaged group of people, as well as to their spiritual needs. When the Academy has been able to retain leaders and faculty who subscribe to the vision and similarly recruit and admit students who are in tune with this vision, there has been no loss or alteration. The Dark Ages were another time where fewer held the vision, but hold it they did and fanned the flames in the embers, so that with the hiring of key individuals, it was allowed to burn brightly again.

4) What key educational leadership decisions were made that ensured the sustainability of the original vision?

Two landmark documents to which the Academy and College families were required to commit were critical in ensuring the sustainability over time of the vision.

These were the *Statement of Faith* and the *Standards of Conduct* documents. Keeping good leaders in positions of authority during critical transitions, such as the moving of the Academy to the Prince Crossing Road campus, was very important to the future of the school. Dean Schell helped to guide it in the ways it should go in those early years. Perhaps the most important decisions made during Headmaster Roth's first two years was the revision of the mission statement, the firing of teachers who clearly were not in alignment with its vision and the recruitment and hiring of those who were. After that, evidence of improvement in service, excellence, and relationships was everywhere and student enrollment and the tuition dollars that followed increased to the benefit of the school. More recently, it has been recognizing the responsibility that the Academy now must embrace to help other schools carve out similar pathways. Perhaps the most important decision was to hire the right people to lead the school at the critical points in time when it was near dissolution.

5) How does Robert Benne's framework of Vision, Ethos, and People relate to the success of sustainability of purpose?

The interplay of these three components has been illustrated in so many ways throughout the history of the school. His framework is clearly seen when one realizes how the Academy's Christian vision is so central and compelling that it drives faculty, alumni, and students to collectively embrace certain practices, behaviors, and make commitments to change the world "for Christ and His Kingdom." Those schools which lose their way do not have enough people who subscribe to the vision or belief systems, and therefore, there is no critical mass to hold the school true to its course. As Keith

underscored, getting the right people in place is the first critical step and then the vision and ethos will follow.

6) What is the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy?

The saga has its roots in the “grassy knoll” story recorded first by Oscar Lumry in the late 1880s. It is retold and referenced again and again in yearbooks, school promotional flyers, special commemorative school celebrations, and graduation speeches. It almost has a mythic power in some of its retelling formats. What it does for the school is to provide the compelling glue to all that is working to actualize the vision of social justice. It is this sense of the historical importance of a mission started 157 years ago that inspires and compels the community to continue on its path. The saga, of course, has evolved, as other chapters have been written—The Zambia Project, for example, is now part of the saga—but it all grows from that initial kneeling in the prairie grass to seek God’s blessing on this school so that prized principles can be passed on to the next generation.

7) When was it initiated and by whom?

As has been said, the saga was probably first written down by historian Oscar Lumry, but its telling and retelling occurred with the sixty-five years of the Blanchards who surely recognized its symbolic power.

8) What key components from Burton Clarke’s work supporting fulfillment of that saga are to be found in the evidence for this institution?

Clarke recognized how important historical events were to people and how they perceived themselves because of them, how it made them feel different than the external

world. Their perceptions take shape in sagas which develop from a point of origin early on in the life of the school or organization to a point when it builds practices that illustrate the vision is institutionalized. Certainly this is true in the life of the Academy. He also talks about the importance of the commitment by various groups of people in the organization to the saga and vision, who express that commitment through the development of key programs and practices. The resulting bonds of trust and loyalty knit together these various stakeholder groups to prevent any erosion of identity or organizational strength, even in times of stress and extreme threat. So it was with the near dissolution of the Academy twice in its past. A group of “believers” rose up, found financing, and forged ahead. His work pairs nicely with that of Benne who focuses as well on Vision, People, and Ethos.

9) What is the significance of this study to today’s educational leader?

The answer to this final question is deserving of this next final section of the dissertation.

CHAPTER XI
SUSTAINING OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The real value of this dissertation is not found in the synthesis of artifacts and interview narratives that together help to relate the organizational saga of a small Christian school; rather it is the meaning we as educators concerned with issues of sustainability are to make of this story of survival. In other words, the story has been told, but now it is time to step back and distill the wisdom that is applicable for any of us interested in organizational identity and preservation of a mission or vision over time, a mission that may fall under our watchful eyes for a time, before we are replaced by those who will hopefully continue to carry the torch. What, then, can educational leaders glean from this case study to inform their current practices and future decision making? Clearly, there are at least fifteen compelling concepts, principles, or actions to take that this researcher has identified as worthy of discussion:

- 1) Engage in authentic strategic planning.

In 1989, during his second year at the Academy, Headmaster David Roth and his Board of Trustees engaged in a process of planning at a critical crossroads in the history of the school. It would have been understandable had they focused solely on the mounting problems confronting them at that moment, but instead they engaged in a process that looked forward to the school they hoped to become in 2003 when the 150th

birthday would be celebrated and beyond. They kept their eyes on the mission and vision, rather than become overwhelmed by the mounting problems. This process enabled them to clarify the mission of the school and their non negotiable, far reaching objectives. Implicit in this planning was an identification of the internal and external barriers to success as well as the steps needed to overcome those obstacles. The resulting document “Planning with Vision” was simply worded, devoid of educational jargon, and touched every aspect of the school, including the broad categories of: leadership, faculty, curriculum, enrollment, students, communication/image, and finances. It was an example of leadership that recognized the importance of “integrating the past, managing the present, and envisioning the future.”¹ A natural next step and perhaps it is a step that is part of that strategic planning process, is to take the time to review and revise the school mission statement. Does it communicate clearly to all that “comprehensive, unsurpassable, central vision,” so compelling that it will magnetically propel people into action? Is it a metric by which all decisions can be measured and evaluated? Will it guide decisions about recruitment and selection of staff and formation of policies and procedures? Is it value-laden? Is it simple enough that individuals can remember it, if not word for word, then at least the important concepts?

2) Conduct a top to bottom or bottom to top review of practices and procedures for their alignment to the aforementioned mission statement? Is there a clear integrity between what is espoused and what is practiced? Schools such as Wheaton Academy have maintained this synergy of purpose and practice through a variety of mechanisms.

¹David Roth, “Planning with Vision,” report requested by ASCI (West Chicago, IL: Wheaton Academy Archives, 1989).

The academy intentionally embedded the important historical stories and the values they exuded into their physical surroundings, their celebrations and speechmaking occasions. Careful use was made of metaphor and symbol to remind all of the community about where they had come from and where they were going. Leaders encouraged students to put into action their beliefs and values by looking to needs of others outside the walls of the community and themselves, to find ways to “give back” and to serve and to verbalize their commonly held beliefs. The idea of Community was important and moments were thus dedicated to come together to recite, to commemorate, to pray, to celebrate aspects of their belief system. A standard of conduct was adhered to that provided structure for those in need of knowing what lines circumscribed appropriate behavior. All of these are aspects of “walking the talk” or what Benne referred to as Ethos.

3) Carefully recruit, select, supervise and reward employees. A well-crafted mission statement enabled the Academy to have the courage to make some tough decisions about staff and in the end they chose to retain only 1/3 of its staff in Dr. Roth’s second year. That same set of criteria formed the basis for hiring and evaluation of staff in the years to come. Though not something that can be done in the public schools at present, due to tenure laws and other union protocols, it certainly can inspire administrators to take seriously their supervisory duties, especially before teachers are granted tenure.

4) Public schools do not have the luxury of selectively choosing which students they will invite to join the learning community, but schools like the Academy fare well when the admissions process and procedures are guided by the mission of the school.

While not as important to rigidly apply the criteria to students as it is to those who will teach the students, it still seems to be about finding the “fit.” Those who are closer to lining up in agreement with a school’s beliefs and practices will have a better chance at individual success and will assist the school community in collective reinforcement and affirmation of those beliefs, values, and practices. Because parents, too, need to clearly understand and affirm the guiding principles of the school, and processes need to be in place that seek to clearly communicate these messages to prospective parents.

5) Take time to reach out with true concern and affection to the alumni base, the circle of “friends” who best understand the mission of the school and who are best situated to support it with emotional and financial resources when economic and external challenges threaten the school’s survival. Many will make a legacy commitment in their estate planning to help sustain the small and large needs of the school. As Dr. Roth stressed in his recounting of the Widow’s Mite story, this base needs to be diversified so that the commitment to the school and what it stands for is distributed across many in the alumni pool, not just a few who may make large one-time donations only to eventually disappear. Support comes in many forms; financial being a crucial one, but it is not the only type of allegiance important in building a cathedral.

6) Take time to engage in short and long term financial planning that accounts for and supports the daily challenges of the boiler that needs replacing as well as the building campaign to expand facilities. This is important to avoid the downward spiral of falling enrollments, deteriorating facilities, and disenfranchised alumni who value excellence in educational opportunities and will seek it elsewhere if it is not available on site. As Dr.

Frost indicates, today it is important to provide a “value-added” message as “loyalty” alone will not sustain school enrollment.² The health of most organizations is witnessed in how they continue to grow and build upon their strengths to address current needs.

7) Sustaining organizational identity necessitates deliberate identification of, planning for, and preparation of the succession of leaders to come. Current leaders must distribute and share their leadership expertise with those who will remain years after they are gone so that a seamless passing of the torch can occur in alignment with deeply held beliefs and mission of the school. Include the organizational saga in new teacher orientation sessions so that they can begin to see themselves as part of the cast of characters writing the next chapter of the saga.

8) Find ways to capture, tell, and retell the organizational saga to all members of the community.

- a. This may first involve taking the time to identify or define what one’s story is. A good place to start is by conducting some focus group interviews of current and recent faculty and administrators, parents, and alumni-- perhaps grouped in representative decades--to solicit and record their memories about the life of the school during that given historical time period. Questions such as: Who were the important leaders? What seemed to be the focus or mission of the school at that time? What were the challenges and how were they overcome or not? What were accomplishments and what were the unrealized dreams?
- b. Celebrate families that have attended the school for multiple generations.

²Dr. Gene Frost, interview by Barbara Dill-Varga, Wheaton Academy West Chicago, IL, December 10, 2010.

- c. Develop symbolic representations that provide a visual reminder of one's mission and saga. Wheaton Academy "stones of remembrance," the orange bricks in honor of aids-stricken *Zambian* students, the chapel banners, and frequent use of *Soli Deo Gloria*, and the planned for "history walk" all point and remind visitors and community members of the school's mission and goals.

9) Understand that different types of leaders and leadership styles and/or combinations of leaders and their divergent strengths may be required at different life stages of an organization. The strong hand of Charles Strobeck, Board President in the 1980s, is probably what single-handedly saved the Academy from dissolution in its darkest hour. The more recent team of Jon Keith, David Roth, and Gene Frost provided the Academy with perhaps its strongest combination of experience, wisdom, imagination, and leadership—all necessary ingredients to guide it into the 21st century. Strengths-based inventories of team members and discussions about those realities should help all honor what individuals can contribute to further the mission of the school. Cathedral building requires that we all share our diverse strengths to enact the vision.

10) Find ways to stabilize the leadership of the school. A revolving door of headmasters, principals, or other critical leaders is usually not going to contribute well to the sustainability of mission over time. This may necessitate a more careful screening process before a leader is selected, or a compensation package that is attractive enough to discourage the leader's consideration of openings in other schools that might be more attractive. It may be as simple as conducting a frank conversation with the prospective

leader about conditions that need to be in place to ensure his or her longevity. When financial options are limited, take into consideration the wisdom of Daniel Pink who in *Drive* lays out a case for the combination of autonomy, mastery, and purpose, providing more of a motivation than “sticks and carrots” motivators often packaged as financial incentives.

11) Recognize and nurture the appropriate role of the Board of Education or Board of Trustees, making sure that they are centrally involved in understanding the mission of the school and what resources—financial and emotional—will be required to sustain it over time. Good communication skills are a necessity for the school leader who must ensure that healthy relationships exist with Board members. When it is time to replace Board members, it is critical to slate candidates or make suggestions of individuals who are a good “fit” for the team bent on moving forward with the organizational goals. Those who have agendas should not be welcomed as Board members, no matter how much money they pledge toward desired projects.

12) Care should be taken to write charters, constitutions, by-laws and the like and to include language to preserve the mission of the organization. Including “poison pills” along the lines of what Dr. Frost advocated ensures that years from now the organization is prevented from tossing aside the critical attributes of belief so tied to the mission.

13) Develop distinctive programs that exude the qualities of the school’s mission but do so in a unique way so as to help to set it apart from other institutions that would compete with it for enrollment and resources. Programs such as *Winterim* provide that “value-added” quality to the Academy. Terminology such as “Living Curriculum

Teachers” begins to imaginatively bring to life in everyday practice the values of the organization.

14) Develop strategies to encourage students to take leadership roles that help to extend the reach of the mission. This will not only build their leadership skills but cause them to be and feel invested in the organizational saga in ways that will remain with them long after graduation. Students at the Academy who have been intimately involved in Project LEAD or the Zambia Project, for example, have been changed forever. They are more likely to stay connected to their high school, to send their children to that school, and/or to stay connected as supportive alumni.

15) Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from this case study is that the leader must not only have the courage of his or her convictions but must know when it is the right time to act and then do so with unbridled determination. This awareness of when it is and is not the time to act is not something easily taught; it may be born from years of experience. Sustaining mission over time often necessitates this extra sensibility as to when to move through the door that has just opened a crack. Veterans know that sometimes one only gets one opportunity to “seize the day.”

These principles are as important for educational leaders today—be they in public schools or in private schools such as Wheaton Academy-- as they are for those inspired to dedicate their lives to building of cathedral.

CONCLUSION

If you listen carefully, you can still hear the pounding of the chisel against the limestone—builders of the medieval cathedrals. During the cold months, when no mortar could be set, the masons, the craftsmen, spent the winter chiseling out the stones, the square blocks and the decorative capitals that would be set in the warmth of spring. Sometimes this ancient mortar, itself, would take a hundred years to fully set. These great cathedral builders had a deeper approach to life. They were never tempted by the tyranny of the urgent. They gave themselves to the abiding, the enduring.

There is the master mason now. Watch him as the bishop comes over and helps, at least for ceremonial appearances, lay the cornerstone, the foundation stone. But in reality, both the bishop and the chief mason know that they will never live to see the end of the construction of the great cathedral.

The mason's great-grandson or his great-great-grandson will eventually lay the capstone almost a century after the mason laid the foundation stone. These master craftsmen were building edifices that would stand for thousands of years.

These sacred spaces of worship could never have been created by the efforts of a single generation. Therefore, no architect ever lived long enough to see his cathedral completed. Each successive generation of masons passed down their passion for creating a sacred space in which to worship the God worthy of their best. And though they knew they would never see their handiwork finished, their reward came from imagining that one day their sons, their daughters, their grandsons, their granddaughters would worship in a building that they had given their best to create.

Like Solomon's Temple, designed by the hand and mind of the greatest architect of all—God—they call us to the holy, to the mystical, to the sacred. When you enter a cathedral, you realize you may have a place in this world, but your significance can only be found as you have relation to the infinite Creator and His people, the great cloud of witnesses.

Some of these churches took over five hundred years to build. A Gothic-style church in Ulm, Germany was begun in 1377 and not completed until

1890. Seventeen generations of stone masons followed the plan scribbled out on 14th century manuscripts. And these great cathedral builders weren't trying to bring any glory to themselves. They were going to be gone before the ribbon was cut or the dedication was uttered. They all died and were buried with the church unfinished. They were building a soaring testimony to the majesty and transcendence of the Almighty.

You see, what I have discovered is something called “cathedral think,” the psychology of building sacred spaces for and with the next generation. The cathedral builders had to have a dramatic impact upon their city so as to propel the project into the future with such a force that successive generations would pick up the ball and run. Or should I say pick up the chisel and hammer—hammer away at building the sacred space? They wanted to build something that would last—really, really last. And if you're going to do that, you can't be consumed with the here and now. You have to have an eye on the future, even while you're tempted to give into the pressure of the present. Scientists are even talking about “cathedral think” these days. Maybe they can take the new formula just so far, and then the next generation of scientists will be able to discover the cure. Don't work on only what you can complete today. But work on what your successor might be able to finish building on your foundation.

Cathedral thinking is the opposite of revolutionary thinking. Revolutionaries want big changes really fast. The cathedral builders didn't think of life that way at all. When you and I bring cathedral thinking to our own lives, we realize we must live strategically, rather than just simply day to day. We must leave an inheritance for the next generation. We must just get ready to pass the baton from ourselves to our children.

Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, “The things which you heard from me, give these to faithful men who will be able to pass it down to others as well.”¹

¹Pastor Howard Batson, “Cathedral Think: Dedicatory Sermon Celebrating the Completion of the Master Plan,” Sermon delivered at First Baptist Church, Amarillo, TX, on November 7, 2010 <http://www.fbcamarillo.org/templates/cusfbcamarillo/details.asp?id=21033&fetch=32422> (accessed February, 2011).

APPENDIX A
LETTER REQUESTING INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

[DATE]

[NAME]

[STREET ADDRESS]

[CITY]. [STATE] [ZIP]

Dear [SALUTATION]:

My name is Barbara Dill-Varga, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policies Study program at Loyola University Chicago. I am also the assistant superintendent for curriculum/instruction at Maine Township HSD 207 in Park Ridge, Illinois. It is an honor to formally invite you to participate in a research project I am conducting.

This study seeks to understand, through a study of its organizational saga, how and why Wheaton Academy, an antebellum academy, has survived for over 157 years and to what extent it has been able to maintain its founding father's Christian vision of social justice. Robert Benne's framework, focused on Vision, Ethos, and People as detailed in *Quality with Soul*, provides a useful lens to organize the study through three phases of the life of the school's saga: initiation, development, and fulfillment. The central research questions of this study are: 1) What was the original vision for the Academy? 2) In what ways can this vision be defined as a Christian vision of social justice? 3) To what extent has it been maintained or altered throughout its history? 3) What key educational leadership decisions were made that ensured the sustainability of the original vision? 4) How does Robert Benne's framework of Vision, Ethos, and People relate to the success of sustainability of purpose? 5) What is the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy? 6) When was it initiated and by whom? 7) What key components from Burton Clarke's work supporting fulfillment of that saga are to be found in the evidence for this institution? 8) What is the significance of this study to today's educational leader? Enclosed is a synopsis of the research, which includes an overview of both the process and any associated risks to participants.

Loyola University Chicago's institutional review Board (IRB) requires a signed letter of cooperation by an appropriate official at the Academy before approval of my study at your institution will be granted. I have included a sample letter of cooperation for your review. I will contact you in the coming weeks to discuss your institution's participation in my study. Thank you for your kind consideration of my proposal.

Sincerely,

Barbara Dill-Varga

Ed.D. Candidate, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Loyola University Chicago

BDV

Enclosures

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

[DATE]

Mrs. Barbara Dill-Varga
702 Lenox Road
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

Project Title: Keeping True to the Cathedral Within: A Case Study of Wheaton Academy and the Initiation, Development, and Fulfillment of its Christian Saga of Social Justice

Researcher: Barbara Dill-Varga

Dear Barbara:

You have proposed a study for which you serve as an investigator. Having read the synopsis of your study [and having satisfied IRB requirements at our institution], I grant your approval to conduct this study at [Name of Institution] on behalf of the institution.

In this study, I understand that you will collect data from interviews with past and current staff and friends of the institution, alumni, and parents. You will also review institutional materials, including documents and websites. You are permitted access to all printed and electronic materials contingent on administrative approval of the release of those materials and that the names of individuals are kept confidential for the sake of human subject anonymity unless they agree so as to become part of a publically accessible oral history of the Academy. The exception to this is individual information that is generally available to the public, such as names found in brochures and websites.

This consent is provided on the condition you also receive permission from Loyola University Chicago's institutional review Board panel to conduct this study.

Sincerely,

[Name of Institutional Representative]
[Title of Institutional Representative]

APPENDIX C
SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH

SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH

Keeping True to the Cathedral Within: A Case Study of Wheaton Academy and the Initiation, Development, and Fulfillment of its Christian Saga of Social Justice

Barbara Dill-Varga
Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University of Chicago
bdill-varga@maine207.org
bdillvarga@gmail.com
630-469-1639 or 630-632-3876

Who am I?

My name is Barbara Dill-Varga, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Loyola University Chicago. I am also the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at Maine Township High School District 207 in Park Ridge, Illinois. Please contact me with any questions.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study seeks to understand, through a study of its organizational saga, how and why Wheaton Academy, an antebellum academy, has survived for over 150 years and to what extent it has been able to maintain its founding father's Christian vision of social justice. Robert Benne's framework, focused on Vision, Ethos, and People as detailed in *Quality with Soul*, provides a useful lens to organize the study through three phases of the life of the school's saga: initiation, development, and fulfillment. The central research questions of this study are: 1) What was the original vision for the Academy? 2) In what ways can this vision be defined as a Christian vision of social justice? 3) To what extent has it been maintained or altered throughout its history? 3) What key educational leadership decisions were made that ensured the sustainability of the original vision? 4) How does Robert Benne's framework of Vision, Ethos, and People relate to the success of sustainability of purpose? 5) What is the organizational saga of Wheaton Academy? 6) When was it initiated and by whom? 7) What key components from Burton Clarke's work supporting fulfillment of that saga are to be found in the evidence for this institution? 8) What is the significance of this study to today's educational leader?

How is the study being conducted?

A case study of Wheaton Academy will be conducted. Primary and secondary historical documents will be reviewed and analyzed. Data will be collected from interviews with key alumni, staff, and educational leaders of the Academy. All available printed and electronic materials on this topic will be reviewed.

How will this study's results be handled?

All information collected will be kept confidential and secure, unless interviewed participants agreed to be identified as their information is important in compiling the oral history of the Academy. The data collected will be analyzed and reported as part of my dissertation. Names of participants who are interviewed will be kept confidential and secure unless they and their information is to be found in documents available to the public such as on websites or in brochures or they agree to become part of the oral history of the Academy. A summary of the results of the study will be available upon request.

What are the possible risks to interview participants?

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Measures will be taken to minimize the possibility of a breach of confidentiality unless agreed to. All individuals will be assigned pseudonyms unless they and their information is available to the public, such as on websites or in brochures or they agree to become part of a publically accessible oral history for the Academy.

What are the possible benefits to participants?

Participants will contribute to a greater understanding of how an educational institutional is able to sustain the original vision of its founding fathers. As a result, educational leaders will benefit from understanding what key decisions must be made and what strategies should be employed to ensure that, long after they are gone, these original values and objectives are still guiding future institutional directions.

What am I requesting of participants?

Interviews will be held at times and locations that are convenient for participants. A one-to-two hour, audio-taped interview will be conducted to gather participants' perceptions and experiences related to the sustainability of the mission at Wheaton Academy.

Permission to electronically record the interview for later transcription will be sought at the time of interview. All tapes and transcripts will be kept secure and confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the report findings except where individuals and their statements are part of documents in the public domain or they agree to have their transcripts become part of the oral history of the Academy.

APPENDIX D
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT MEMBER'S CONSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY
(for use with all interview subjects)**

Project Title

Keeping true to the cathedral within: a case study of Wheaton Academy and the initiation, development, and fulfillment of its Christian saga of social justice

Researcher: Barbara Dill-Varga, Ed.D. Candidate

Faculty Sponsor: Janis Fine, Ph.D.

Introduction

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Barbara Dill-Varga for a dissertation under the supervision of Janis Fine, Ph.D., in the Program of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Loyola University Chicago. You are being asked to participate because you have been identified as an individual who has firsthand knowledge of Wheaton Academy. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding to participate in this study. Before you are interviewed, it is necessary to read, understand, and sign the attached form to show your consent to being interviewed and to indicate whether you give permission to attach your real name to the information you provide the researcher.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to learn about how and why an educational organization, such as Wheaton Academy, has been able to sustain the vision of its founding fathers over 150 years after its creation. What are the decisions that educational and organizational leaders made which were essential to keeping the original mission intact, given the numerous distractions and threats to its stated objectives and to its very survival? How have they been able to ensure that the vision of the "cathedral" originally conceived at the founding of the institution is actually realized?

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an hour-long interview. Interviews will be held at times and locations that are convenient for you. The electronically recorded interview will be conducted to gather your perceptions and experiences related to Wheaton Academy. You will be asked to respond to about a dozen questions. You will be sent a copy of a transcription of your interview after the interview for your review and correction.

You will be asked to return to the researcher your written corrections on the transcript (SASE provided) or your signature of consent on a form that the transcription is correct (SASE provided). Your identity and others you might identify will only be revealed if permission is granted from each individual. Any individuals suggested by you for the researcher to contact and interview will undergo the same pre interview process, be similarly be provided with this information about the study, as well as a consent form to be signed prior to their interview.

Risks/Benefits

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Although there are no direct benefits to participants, it is possible that this research will contribute to a greater understanding of how organizational visions are sustained over time. Upon request, the findings of this study will be provided to all participants who will benefit from learning about Wheaton Academy and/or similar educational organizations.

Confidentiality

Measures will be taken to minimize the possibility of a breach of confidentiality. All information collected that identifies individuals and/or institutions by name, including copies of electronically recorded interviews, will be kept safely secured in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home and then destroyed within one year after the study is completed unless permission is granted to do otherwise. Interviews will be transcribed and coded using pseudonyms unless permission has been granted to use the participant's real name. The transcriber will be informed of and required to maintain confidentiality and will be required to sign a form regarding that requirement.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not wish to be part of the study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions about this research project or interview, feel free to contact Barbara Dill-Varga at (630) 469-1639 or bdillvarga@cs.com. You may also contact Mrs. Dill-Varga's faculty sponsor, Dr. Janis Fine, at (312) 915-7022 or jfine@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Services at Loyola University at (773) 508-2689.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I, _____, agree to be interviewed
(Insert Printed Name)

as part of the doctoral research conducted by Barbara Dill-Varga for her dissertation study entitled, “Keeping True to the Cathedral Within: A Case Study of Wheaton Academy and the Initiation, Development and Fulfillment of its Christian Saga of Social Justice.” **I understand that my interview will be electronically recorded and that a written transcript of this interview will be provided by the researcher to me, for my review and consent as to its accuracy prior to its use in the dissertation.**

My initials in the checkbox below signify my agreement to additional conditions of this interview and resulting use of that information for that study.

I agree to allow researcher Barbara Dill-Varga **to use my name in conjunction with any information I have provided to her during this interview.** I understand that after the interview, I will be given an opportunity to review a transcript of the interview and make corrections to it to ensure its accuracy. I understand that this information and my name may become part of a published dissertation. I understand that the written record of my interview will be kept in a locked file drawer at 702 Lenox Rd. in Glen Ellyn for one year following the publication of the dissertation.

OR

I agree to allow researcher Barbara Dill-Varga **to use any information I have provided to her during the interview process to facilitate her dissertation, but I would like my identity to be masked through the use of a pseudonym.** I understand that after the interview I will be given an opportunity to review a transcript of the interview and make corrections to it to ensure its accuracy. I understand that this information and my name may become part of a published dissertation. I understand that the written record of my interview will be kept in a locked file drawer at 702 Lenox Rd. in Glen Ellyn for one year following the publication of the dissertation.

Participant’s Signature Date

Researcher’s Signature Date

Your signature above and related initials in the checkbox indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study at this time. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. I understand that this interview is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the process at any time.

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Vision

1. What do you believe is the central mission of Wheaton Academy?
2. In what ways is that mission or vision made evident or expressed?
3. In what ways has this vision changed since the founding of the school, or has it?
4. What key educational decisions were made that have been instrumental in carrying out this vision?
5. Why has Wheaton Academy survived when other private schools and academies have not?
6. What are the historical stories that are told which best represent this vision?
7. What challenges lie ahead for the Academy?

Ethos

1. What are the behaviors and practices that are in alignment with this vision?
2. What behaviors and practices are not in alignment?
3. What is the process used to evaluate alignment of ethos to vision?
4. What steps have been taken when a lack of alignment is identified?
5. How is the desired alignment communicated to the people of the Academy?

People

1. Who are the individuals that have been instrumental in sustaining that vision during the history of the school and what were their contributions?
2. What are the guidelines for hiring employees at the Academy?
3. What are the criteria used for making decisions about admitting incoming students?
4. What is the role of the Board of Trustees in the governance of the school and how are these individuals chosen?
5. Does the Academy subscribe to a particular denominational set of beliefs?
6. What is the relationship of Wheaton Academy with the Christian community at large? With other Christian high schools? With Wheaton College?

APPENDIX F
TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

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interviews for the doctoral research of Barbara Dill-Varga entitled, "Keeping True to the Cathedral Within: A Case Study of Wheaton Academy and the Initiation, Development and Fulfillment of its Christian Saga of Social Justice." I will maintain strict confidentiality of the data files and the transcripts. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

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APPENDIX G

EIGHT STAGES IN THE LIFE OF AN ORGANIZATION

Eight Stages in the Life of an Organization

CONCEPTION	A group of people see an advantage to voluntarily coming together and start an association.
INFANCY	The founders are still in charge as the organization struggles to survive. Every job requires more work than the founders can do.
PUBERTY	The organization grows steadily but suffers from awkwardness in its dealings with outsiders and with internal coordination. Entrepreneurial skills are gradually replaced by more professional management techniques and skills.
YOUNG ADULTHOOD	Accepted management practices are implemented, including formalized personnel practices. The beginning of bureaucracy and internal politics are evident.
ADULTHOOD	The organization is mastering its environment and serving the needs of its members. Management is peaking and preparing to expand, enter new areas of service or add new functions.
LATE ADULTHOOD	The excitement of the organization has diminished. The membership will not support innovation. A complacent atmosphere lacking any sense of urgency or zeal prevails.
OLD AGE	The organization is losing its ability to cope with its environment and serve the real needs of its members. Managers and leaders bicker and internal control is lacking. All of a sudden things seem to come apart, and few people seem to care.
REVITALIZATION/OBSCURITY/DISSOLUTION	

Adapted from J.J. Cribben, *Leadership* and Kimberly and Miles, *The Organizational Life Cycle*.

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VITA

Barbara Dill-Varga is the daughter of Pauline A. Dill and W. Wade Dill. She was born in Lakewood, Ohio on March 30, 1955 and graduated as valedictorian of her class of 536 at Berea High School in Berea, Ohio in 1973. She graduated in 1977 from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois with a Bachelor of Arts degree in literature, with minors in writing and speech. In addition she completed necessary coursework to teach high school English.

Her first teaching position was at Glenbard West High School in Glen Ellyn, Illinois where she taught for 23 years, the last 11 were spent also chairing the English, Speech, ESL departments. During that time she obtained her Master's degree in English from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in 1983 and her Type 75 administrative and supervisory certificates from Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois in 1994. During the first decade of her career she was an active member of the Illinois Writing Project, conducting workshops across the state of Illinois from 1979-1990. She partnered with two colleagues in 1988 to co-author a teacher's manual for A.T. and T's *Writer's Workbench*, and worked for several years following that conducting workshops to assist teachers in how to use this text analysis software to improve the writing of their students. From 1996-2001, she also was an adjunct professor at Wheaton College teaching an undergraduate methods course for future English teachers.

In 2000 she was hired as associate principal for curriculum and instruction at Glenbrook South High School in Glenview, Illinois. After three years in that position, she was promoted to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services in Glenbrook District 225, serving Northbrook and Glenview. The position included responsibilities for all grants, state reports, related educational services, and working with the buildings on school improvement/staff development related initiatives. During that time she also served as the Board Secretary for the Glenbrook District 225 Board of Education. She began her doctorate degree in 2005 in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois during her tenure at Glenbrook, and worked to complete her state superintendency endorsement in 2007. Six years later in 2009, she relocated to Park Ridge, taking a position as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at Maine Township High School District 225 where she still works at present. Her main responsibilities focus on staff development and development of curriculum and related school improvement programs. She oversees directors in special education, technology, and grants and assessments. In this role, she also serves as president of the NSERVE Board which provides oversight for five area districts as they plan and implement programming supported by state and federal career and technical education grant funds. She currently resides in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago with her husband, Steven Varga, and one son, Alex.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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