

This Is The Mansfield That Was

By PAUL L. WHITE

Mansfield-OSU Campus is the fulfillment of a dream that Mansfielders first had over one hundred eleven years ago — to have a well qualified liberal arts college here. The first attempt in the pre-Civil War era ended in the community's frustration and eventual rejection of the alternate Institute that was established then.

In the Spring of 1853 the Methodist Church indicated that Mansfield was being considered as a site for a new school of higher learning if Mansfielders would procure property on which to erect a suitable building. At this point communications between the North Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church and interested Mansfielders apparently broke down.

Mansfield citizens were under the impression that the Methodists would establish a liberal arts college on a par with, or exceeding, Ohio Wesleyan at Delaware and land was purchased and deeded over to the church at one of the best locations in Mansfield.

The plot of land extended from West Market St. (Park Avenue West) north to what is now West Third St., and was described as being pleasantly situated for a college and filled with a great variety of forest and ornamental trees ideal for a campus.

By the time that the 54' x 76' four - story brick building was underway Mansfielders learned, much to their chagrin that the edifice would house not a college but a female seminary to be known as Mansfield Female Seminary, a boarding and day school for "daughters of elite and select families."

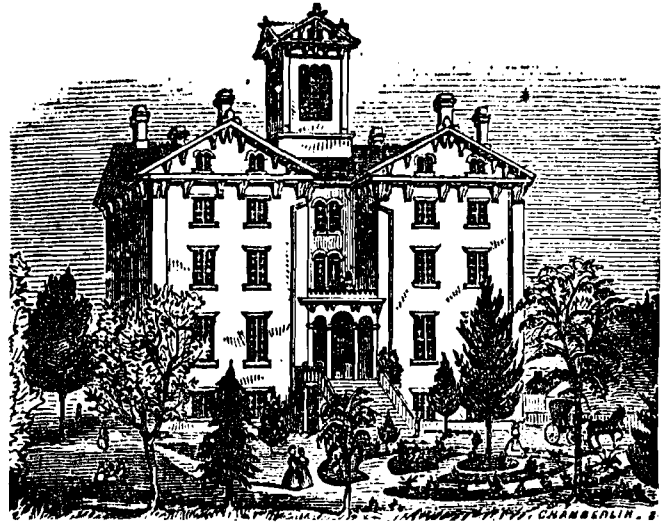
A storm of protest was voiced by the citizens and many letters to the editors of the daily and weekly papers were written and published, but to no avail.

The Methodists stood their ground and on Oct. 25, 1855, the \$22,447 structure was dedicated. On Nov. 7, 1855, the seminary opened with an enrollment of 113 young ladies and a staff of professors under the direction of Professor N. G. Andrews of Cazenovia, N. Y.

During the Civil War the Mansfield Female Seminary although apparently in deep financial trouble was still operating and may have had a brief period of resurgence. The annual catalog of 1863-64 school year listed several local young ladies as students.

Miss Phoebe Bushnell and Miss Ozellah Phelps were listed second and third in the Senior Class academic standings. Miss Anna Miller and Miss Sophie Redrup were also included in the class of seven.

The roster of the junior class second year included Bertie Johns, Martha Kellam, Mary Mitchell and Mary Burns and Lizzie Finney students with family names that



Mansfield Female Seminary, "A select Family Boarding School for young ladies."

were prominently connected with early Mansfield history.

Out of the total enrollment of 101 there were 63 Mansfield students with the entire first and second year Preparatory Classes composed of Mansfielders. Home addresses of students included Cincinnati, Johnstown, Warsaw, (Indiana, Marion, Granville, Shelby, Worthington (Ind.), Orville, Sandusky, Mt. Vernon and one from New York City.

The Rt. Rev. C. P. McIlvaine, DD DCL of Cincinnati, was the director of the school during this period. It is interesting to note that each student was provided a Bible and required to regularly attend Sunday worship at the church of their parents' choice. Where no particular choice was expressed by the parents, the students were expected to attend Grace Episcopal church services which indicates that by 1863 the seminary had passed out of the control of the Methodist Church.

Boarding students could receive callers on Saturday afternoons and evenings first getting approval of their parents concerning the particular caller and the visitors were from Mansfield.

Great emphasis was placed on punctuality at all times which apparently was considered the primary attribute of being a proper lady in those days.

A literary and benevolent association, the Agathonia Society, was supported liberally by the young ladies of the Seminary according to the catalogue. "Its design is principally the cultivation of the benevolent affections, as well as the greater improvement of the intellect," according to the published report.