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## “\$20,000 in Six Weeks”

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## “\$20,000 in Six Weeks” or How to Fund a Science Building, circa 1931

**S**o if you have the inspiration to delve into the wonders of nature and the marvels of this scientific age, come to E. M. C. and study, free from evolutionary and atheistic theories of modernism," the college advertised in the *Student Movement* of June 6, 1929. The "school family" of Emmanuel Missionary College boasted 10 pre-med graduates and six other science graduates in the class of 1929 (7). The following school year of 1929–30, enthusiastic students formed yet another campus club: Scientia, the new science club, "to foster the interest of the study of natural science among students; to keep it on a high cultural plane with other branches of learning; to encourage a greater interest in spiritual matters; and to promote the improvement of equipment and facilities in the Science Department."<sup>1</sup>

The science facilities certainly needed a boost. They suffered from "scattered equipment, widely separated laboratories, and make-shift classrooms."<sup>2</sup> The chemistry department resided in the basement of the music building. Those who shared the building with the laboratories below remembered that "For years H<sub>2</sub>S gas and other characteristic odors were wafted up to the practice rooms, filling the air with their peculiar fragrance."<sup>3</sup> The rest of the science department remained in the basement of the original, onion-domed administration building. The *Student Movement* opined that

"science has literally been 'run into the ground' at E.M.C."<sup>4</sup>

Professor Reu Hoen, in 1931, described the chemistry labs in dire terms: "We are just getting by until next year by patching up the old sinks, drains, and so forth. Our situation is very adverse to the conduct of the type of efficiency which we wish to see."<sup>5</sup>

The dream for new science quarters began in earnest in 1929, along with the new science club. Every edition of the *Student Movement* published "The Movement's Platform," or a list of goals for the school, under its masthead. "A new science building" made



*The Science Hall and lily pond outside Burman Hall*

the list every time.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1930, the school paper reported that Professor F. W. Griffin, the architectural drawing and woodcraft teacher, was working on plans for the "proposed" science building.<sup>7</sup> The school also began to salt away money for the badly needed facility, banking the profits from selling radio station WEMC to fund a science hall.<sup>8</sup>

The new president, Lynn H. Wood, himself a science teacher, arrived on campus and added new impetus to the plans. Perhaps because of financial exigencies, Wood floated the idea of an addition to the administration building that would house the science department rather than a separate structure. Trained in architectural engineering at the University of Michigan, the president brought a sketch of his idea to the board.<sup>9</sup> But after carefully examining the pros and cons of the various proposals, the board opted to build "a modest science building . . . separate from the administration building."<sup>10</sup>

The new structure would be "modest" out of necessity. The Depression had struck, and EMC was cutting corners and counting pennies. Located between Maple Hall (the men's dormitory—later Burman Hall) and the music building, the science hall would be 40 feet by 66 feet, three stories tall and would house "three laboratories for biology, physics, and chemistry, respectively; several stock rooms for supplies and equipment; two lecture rooms; lavatories, work rooms, and offices."<sup>11</sup>

Student enthusiasm took over as soon as the board made its decision. Always thrilled by a cause and a campaign, the EMC students held one of their famous chapel rallies. The *Student Movement* reported, "'\$20,000 in six weeks' was the slogan of every student, as he left the chapel Wednesday morning after the conclusion of a program that launched the campaign for the Science building (23 April 1931, 1). The administration actually expected the students to raise only \$6,500 of the estimated \$20,000 in construction costs, but the slogan certainly sounded impressive. Even \$6,500, however, was a monumental sum in an era when



*Professor Reu E. Hoen, professor of physical science and mathematics (pictured left), with students in the 1930s.*

tuition for a full load cost \$14 a month.<sup>12</sup>

The students were undaunted. Breaking into bands according to their home conferences, they launched a letter-writing campaign during chapel the very next day, attacking the pile of 8,000 letterheads and envelopes that had been printed.<sup>13</sup>

The board had agreed the building would be constructed on a pay-as-you-go basis. The administration had some money in hand already and lost no time in getting started. The ceremonial shovel of earth was turned on May 31, 1931, and excavation began.<sup>14</sup>

By the next school year the building was partially in use. On October 1 the *Student Movement* announced, "We are very glad to report that the new science building is being used daily and that the work on it is being rapidly carried forward to completion. The laboratories are not quite ready for use as yet but the lecture rooms are in use. This airy, well lighted structure is a wonderful improvement over the former quarters of the science department" (1).



*For the last quarter of a century the building has housed the art department*

Student excitement over the science hall did not wane. The school year of 1932-33,



*Aerial view of Emmanuel Missionary College, circa 1941 (Science Hall is indicated)*

Scientia, under the leadership of Grover Fattic, second-semester president, proposed to hold an open house in their still new building:

*Most of our friends know little of what goes on in the Science Building. They think that the*

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*"This airy, well-lighted structure is a wonderful improvement over the former quarters of the science department"*

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*chemistry department exists solely to make foul smelling gases and materials that may blow up at any minute. And if they have never visited the biology laboratory they believe that all the students ever do is cut up pickled, formaldehyde-soaked fish.*

*But these ideas are entirely wrong. We want our friends to change their preconceived notions, so we have planned to open the building for their inspection....<sup>15</sup>*

The faculty entertainment committee, however, was alarmed and initially denied Scientia their approval for the open house. The committee members felt that there would be entirely too much time for "free association" between young men and women during the proposed evening activities. Deans Lamson and Burman were sure that such an occasion did not provide nearly enough supervision. Fattic began his careful diplomacy, visiting each member of the committee, including the deans. He negotiated a compromise: Scientia could have half the time set aside for Saturday-night entertainment.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the open-house lasted all of 45 minutes, from 6:15 until 7:30.

The "inspection" of the building proved a big success: "Two hundred and twenty-

seven guests of the Scientia Club crowded the Science Hall on the evening of March 25...."<sup>17</sup> Math, physics, biology, and chemistry teachers and students gave demonstrations in every room, showing off the wonders of science and the brand-new accommodations.

To the students of the 1930s, the new science quarters in their "modest" little building, built from scrimping, saving, sacrificing, and campaigning were, they boasted, "super-facilities."<sup>18</sup>

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> *Cardinal*, Berrien Springs, MI: Emmanuel Missionary College, 1929, 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Cardinal*, Berrien Springs, MI: Emmanuel Missionary College, 1931, 63.

<sup>3</sup> Ella Iden Edwards, "The Expansion Period of E.M.C.," unpublished typescript of a paper read at Founder's Day program, 1945, 1, AHC.

<sup>4</sup> 1 October, 1931, 1.

<sup>5</sup> "Science Hall Proposed at E.M.C.," *Student Movement*, 21 May 1931, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Beginning with 9 September 1929, 2.

<sup>7</sup> 13 March, 1930.

<sup>8</sup> EMC Board Minutes, 21 April 1930, 503.

<sup>9</sup> EMC Board Minutes, 23 December 1930, 13.

<sup>10</sup> EMC Board Minutes, 4 March 1931, 31.

<sup>11</sup> *Cardinal*, 1931, 63.

<sup>12</sup> *EMC Bulletin*, 1932-33, 40.

<sup>13</sup> *Student Movement*, 23 April 1931, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Student Movement*, 21 May 1931, 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Student Movement*, 23 March 1933, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Grover Fattic, letter to the author, 6 August 2001, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Student Movement*, 6 April 1933, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Cardinal*, 1931, 63.

**EDITORS NOTE:** Due to failing structural integrity, the art building (formerly Science Hall) is slated to be razed in the coming months.

*Andrews historian and professor of English, Meredith Jones Gray (BA '76, MA '77), is author of As We Set Forth.*