

THE FIRST ENTRANCE

by Meredith Jones Gray

“I remember visiting the farm sometime that summer. You had to walk out [from Berrien Springs] then, there being no such thing as a bus line, nor a paved road, nor to our knowledge an automobile, and the interurban electric railroad was not yet put through. So we walked the dusty two miles,” wrote Arthur W. Spalding of the summer of 1901, when he visited the new campus of Emmanuel Missionary College.¹

A sandy track led into the Garland farm, the same track that Percy Magan and Edward Sutherland had pedaled along on their trusty bicycles only months earlier as they looked for suitable land for a school in the country. The lane connected the fledgling school to the main road, often called the St. Joe road and sometimes, after it was paved, the stone road.

From there the modest road, which became the primary entrance to EMC, carried straight on through campus to the college farm at the other end. Dr. Mary McReynolds remembered how it was bordered on one side “by those gorgeous old soft maple trees.”² But very early in the school’s history the pioneers planted a line of Norway spruce along both sides of the road, further emphasizing its status as the main entrance. Later the central college building, which became South Hall, faced the chapel building, or West Hall, across

the College Road. Further on, Birch Hall, the women’s dormitory (1902), looked toward Maple Hall, the men’s residence (1919), which would later be named Burman Hall. The old farm lane had become the main artery through the heart of campus life.

Out on the St. Joe road, however, there was little to suggest what exactly lay at the end of the College Road. E.K. Vande Vere reports a story about two South Bend businessmen who drove onto campus early in the 20s and met John Sampson, “Mechanical Superintendent,” and Fred Green, “Financial Secretary”:

“What have you got here?” one of them asked.

“This is a small denominational college,” I [Green] replied.

“Well, we have driven by on the road many times; always wondered what was back in here.”

The visitors went on to place an order for 2,000 screen doors from the college woodshop.³

EMC’s main entrance did not always prove easy to navigate. In 1921, business manager Fred Green began working toward paving the entrance. The local newspaper, the *Journal Era*, reported, “During the past winter the road has been nearly impassable and its improvement is greatly needed.”

(No wonder the official speed limit for automobiles on campus was 15 mph!)⁴ The problem was, the first quarter mile of the road was considered a “public highway” and Green was trying to secure local funding to help with the project. The college would pay half and the residents along the road would contribute, but who would pay the balance? The county couldn’t, according to their policies, and Green needed to approach the township.⁵

Then fate (or the March rains) stepped in. Emmanuel Missionary College, laying the groundwork for a fund-raising drive, invited 75 local businessmen to an “elaborate banquet” at the college. In the after dinner speeches, reported the *Journal Era*, “Village President C. R. Sparks was asked to speak on ‘good roads’, a subject suggested by the fact that his machine was nearly stalled in the mud on the College road.” The main point of Sparks’ speech was that the college was “a great asset” to Berrien Springs and “he believed the community should join with them in building their road.”⁶ Fred Green had won his point intellectually at least, although no record has been found that the road was paved until 1933, more than ten years later.⁷

Although College Avenue, as it later came to be called, provided the main entrance to EMC for many years, the little neighborhood that sprang up along the street between the main road and the campus, was hardly ostentatious. It came to be known, in fact, as “Stringtown,” in spite of official attempts to rename it “Campus View.”⁸ Still, the school kept trying to improve its entrance. In 1940, reported the local paper, the avenue had been “illuminated with eight street lights” from the “Midget” store, a fixture of the small community just off campus and a boon to snack-hungry students, and the chapel building, “thereby affording greater convenience to pedestrians from the college community to the campus.”⁹



The doorway to Andrews in the early 1900s



which EMC has been founded. Now the expansive lawns are taken for granted, but it certainly would not be the last “furor” about a road.

New entrances to campus would be added, of course. Grove Avenue (a new “boulevard”) in 1923–24. University Boulevard—“the new \$25,000 college entrance”¹²—in 1959. Garland Avenue in 1968. The old College Avenue, as Vande Vere puts it, almost “vanished from the face of the campus.”¹³ And now, in 2008, Andrews University has a new entrance and a new road, J. N. Andrews Boulevard. Look carefully: it shadows very closely that old college road.

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- 1 “Some Notes on the Early History of Emmanuel Missionary College,” 11 May 1947, TMs, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.
- 2 Letter to “Editor ‘Our E.M.C. Alumni,’” 10 January 1954, Vande Vere Collection, CAR, JWL.
- 3 *The Wisdom Seekers* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1972), 151.
- 4 EMC Faculty Minutes, 30 October 1921, 198, CAR, JWL.
- 5 “E.M. College Wants Road to Grounds Paved,” 7 April 1921.
- 6 “College Host to 75 Business Men at Elaborate Banquet,” 30 March 1922.
- 7 Vande Vere, *Wisdom Seekers*, 168.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 146.
- 9 “E.M.C. Items,” JE 31 October 1940.
- 10 Letter to E. K. Vande Vere, 22 April 1968. Box 12, fld 9, Vande Vere Collection, CAR, JWL.
- 11 Letter to E. K. Vande Vere, 10 December 1959. Box 12, fld 5, Vande Vere Collection, CAR, JWL. In his letter Nethery asks Vande Vere to retype the letter and correct his spelling and punctuation; I have taken the liberty to make those corrections for him in the passages quoted above.
- 12 “\$25,000 Boulevard Under Construction,” Student Movement 12 August 1959, 5.
- 13 P. 257.

Lest anyone believe that a road is just a road and not a topic laden with emotion, one has only to take note of the controversy set off in the school year of 1939–40 when the administration decided to close College Avenue from the new Administration Building on and turn it into green campus, thus cutting off the direct route from the main road to the farm. Two of the three men involved in the decision remembered vividly the uproar caused by President Henry J. Klooster (1937–1943) and his colleagues.

Lewis N. Holm, then business manager, was willing to take responsibility for the decision. He had taken landscaping classes as part of his master’s program at Michigan State College and felt that the change would reduce the dangers of having cars drive through the middle of campus. Holm felt it would also open up the campus to appear more spacious, allow for more beautiful landscaping, keep parking lots to the edges of campus and create better opportunities for expansion.

But his ideas met with “considerable voiced opposition,” especially when some of the precious pioneer spruces were removed. From Holm’s point of view, “Really they [the trees] were removed not as a part of re-routing the drive-ways, but because they were dying and it would improve the appearance of the campus to open it up more and get away from the line effects of these trees in the center of the campus.”¹⁰

Jay J. Nethery, then president of the Lake Union and chair of the college board,

who backed Klooster and Holm in their plans, reminisced about the upheaval in much saltier terms.¹¹ A certain contingent in the community resisted any change; Nethery characterized them as those who “worshipped at the shrine of Professor Sutherland & Magan” and felt that “What was good enough for them should be good enough for us.” Everyone connected to the school, Nethery pointed out tersely, “revered” Sutherland and Magan; the new plans were not intended to dishonor them.

The local “counselors,” however, “... held neighborhood prayer meetings and expressed the conviction that the ‘latter day’ depredations would be halted.” For the opponents, the fact that the “manure spreader” could no longer make “direct trips on the college avenue between buildings to the hungry fields” was an explicit repudiation of the ideals on

