

GRADUATIONS AT THE SEMINARY

Submitted by Village of Richfield Springs Historian Harriett Geywits

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” A quote from Theodore Roosevelt seems to describe the feelings of the citizens of the Town and Village of Richfield regarding the education of their young. Other than the one-room schoolhouses in the various hamlets within the township, and later, the Union School and Academy (Bronner Street School) serving the public from 1887 until 1939 when the school districts consolidated to form the Central School District #1 on a twenty acre site, there was another source of higher education offered in the later years of the 1800s that might not be remembered. An article that was published in the SEMINARY STUDENT, written by Professor A. R. Getman, in 1885 tells of the early days of the Richfield Springs Seminary as follows:

“In the autumn of 1875, Professors A. E. Goodier and N. W. Cadwell proposed to citizens in and about Richfield Springs, that our pleasant village and its locality was eminently adapted for the support of a first-class Seminary. Citizens, always eager for the advancement of our village, heartily accepted the proposal and as a result, the Richfield Spring Seminary took its beginning in the memorable 1876 in the rooms of what is known as the Kendallwood. During the decade that has followed, there have been many changes. Our former principal, N. W. Cadwell, has severed his connection with the institution, to take up the noblest of professions, the ministry, and we are glad to relate that his efforts in his new career have been very prosperous. He is at present located in the first Presbyterian church of Westfield, N. J.

At the close of the first year of the Seminary’s history, its friends were called to listen to the exercises of the first graduating class in the person of J. Corwin Jacques, of Batavia, N.Y. Since that tie to Richfield, Mr. Jacques has entered Hamilton College, passed a successful career therein and has received the degree of A.M. Mr. Jacques, as the first graduate of the Seminary, gave evidence of the rising prosperity of the school. A man stern of character, upright in intention and studious in the pursuits of life was thus eminently adapted to be the first graduate who has passed from the hall of the Seminary. Two years intervened between the first and second graduation class. The students as well as the Seminary were young, thus there were no seniors for ‘78.

As the commencement day of ‘79 made its appearance, it beheld the going forth into other fields of action three gentlemen, Messrs. A J. Abeal, C. C. Ransom and J. D. Reed. Since ‘79 the first named gentleman has graduated from Hamilton College and won while there the praise of both student and professor for his fidelity to work and uprightness of character. At this writing, Mr. Abeal is in Auburn Theological Seminary, completing there the last year of his course in Theology. Those who had the pleasure of listening to him in the Presbyterian church of this village only a short time since must have been moved and impressed with his eloquence and earnestness.

Mr. C. C. Ransom, since his graduation has entered the Medical College at Buffalo graduating with high honors and received the degree of M. D. After practicing about a year in this village, he deemed it advisable to pursue a thorough course of medicine in Germany and but a short time since has finished said course. The medical profession will be honored to receive him among its illustrious physicians.

Mr. J. D. Reed did not pursue a college course, but soon after his graduation began the study of law in Utica. From there he entered the Albany Law School and graduated there from. Mr. Reed is at present one of the leading young lawyers of Otsego County.

The class of ‘80 was seven in number - two ladies and five gentlemen: Misses Ella F. Kinney and Jennie E Place; Messrs. C. W. Allen, J. D. Cary, H. E. Case, O. A. Chamberlain and A. R. Getman.

Miss Kinney, soon after graduation, received a position in the Union Free School at Mohawk. Here she manifested an admirable ability for teaching in the primary department. After having served one year in Mohawk, she accepted a position in one of



the finest schools of Hartford Conn.

Miss Jennie E. Place, now Mrs. F. J. House is at present engaged as teacher of French and German in West Winfield Graded School. She has been connected with the above named school for three years and has made her efforts a success to the institute.

Messrs. C. W. Allen, J. D. Cary and A. R. Getman graduated from Hamilton College in the class of ‘84. The first named is at present conducting a successful school in Cedarville, N.Y. The second has pursued a post graduate course in Harvard College and is at present devoting himself to literary work, preparatory to his intended profession. The last is engaged as teacher of the Ancient Languages together with Elocution and Rhetoric in the Richfield Springs Seminary. Mr. H. E. Chase had a successful course in Cornell University, graduating with the class of ‘85. Since his graduation from there, we have not learned positively concerning his whereabouts, but understand that he is conducting a successful business in one of the western town of this state. Mr. O. A. Chamberlain, since his graduation, has been carefully watching over the fruits of the soil. Success has attended him thus far and we wish him ultimate success in the future. The farmer is the hub about which all economic progress moves.

The class of ‘81 had five members: Misses Agnes Sitts and Mae White; Messrs. Springer Goes, F. J. House and George Wadsworth. The ladies are at present living near the village at the home of their school days. Mr. Goes is engaged in farming with his father. Prof. F. J. House is principal of the West Winfield School and teacher of Latin, Greek and the Sciences. During the summer season he serves at the Express Desk of the Western Union Telegraph Office in Richfield. George Wadsworth is a graduate of Syracuse University and is pursuing an educational career.

The class of ‘82 had eleven graduates including well-known artist Ellen Clapsaddle. Others went on to be teachers, doctors, and esteemed members of the business world.”

The Richfield Springs Seminary served as a source of continued education for the area until 1886. Classes were held during the winter months when the Kendallwood Hotel was not open to summer visitors. They advertised that they would prepare students to enter any American college - without condition. The Commercial Department was listed as the same as Business College. Special courses were offered in Music, Modern Languages and the Sciences with a full corps of teachers. The Kendallwood, which would accommodate 100 guests, was at the southeast corner of Main and Manley streets in the area where the Dollar General is now located. It was torn down in 1957.

The success of the graduates of the Richfield Springs Seminary proved the adage that education is the foundation upon which we build our future.