

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

---

# Minerva College

---

reprinted from the bulletin of the  
**The Mason County  
Genealogical Society**  
Vol. XI, Number 3

---

Author unattributed

---

[www.nkyviews.com](http://www.nkyviews.com)

Ever think of Minerva as a "college town?"

It was - prior to the Civil War through the turn of the Twentieth century. Back on March 10, 1906, the Minerva College noted its 50th anniversary as "the greatest occasion in the history of the school." The class of 1905 was made up of five students.

Actually, the Minerva College was a combined elementary and high school. Grades ranged from the first through the seventh of primary school and from the first through the third year of high school.

The Minerva College Bulletin of May 1905, printed in the Public Ledger's job department, contains the superintendent's report by Ezra L. Gillis, now the University of Kentucky's 91-year-old director of the Bureau of Source Materials in Higher Education.

Problems of the educator have not changed much since those days.

Mr. Gillis, who was appointed in 1902 and held the post for five years, notes in the Bulletin that "the first duty of the school is to make intelligent readers of its pupils," and that "the most important duty of the school is the formation of correct habits of study."

And if the teacher's aims haven't changed much in the past half century, neither have the children's parents. For example, here is Mr. Gillis' observation in 1905:

"Timely assistance, given to children in the home is very valuable, but many well meaning parents spend the evenings preparing lessons for their children...The children are in school next day with an idea that they know their lessons, spend time in idleness and come to class with only a hazy idea of their work...Thus the children are robbed of the greatest blessing to be derived from an education - the power to do things for themselves."

First term at the school started September 4 and ended December 22. The second term began New Year's Day and ended April 20.

The "college" students were required to prepare their lessons at the school and were furnished with maps, charts, dictionaries and books of reference that "cannot be had in every home."

Minerva College had been bequeathed property and a trust fund by James M. Hieatt and wife. Each year the school held an exercise in his memory. The class of 1904 was reminded by Clarence L. Sallee, president of the Maysville Board of Education, that they owed their education to that couple.

"You also owe it," Mr. Sallee pointed out, "to 'Squire Byar and Squire Weaver and Dr. Reed, who by their friendly counsel, advise and encouragement, crystallized into execution the heart-felt desire of James M. Hieatt to remember by his late will and testament the children of the community in which he and his good wife lived and toiled and died."

The school library was established in 1893 and by 1903, the Bulletin notes, contained a total of 281 books, "adapted to the needs of every grade."

Mr. Gillis explains in the report, "One of the perils of public education is the ruthless habit of holding up to pupils ambitions and aspirations which cannot be possible for them to realize - that they may all be Governors, Presidents, or become famous in some chosen profession. Jealousy and selfish ambition are the natural products of this false training. True greatness does not need the sanction of public approval nor an official robe to adorn it..."

One of the five members of that class of 1905 became an outstanding leader in Kentucky education. In the class were, as pictured in the Bulletin, Lloyd Winter, Miss Lena Liston, Miss Minnie Greenlee, Miss Anne Greenlee and Herman Donovan.

Herman Lee Donovan was to become president of the University of Kentucky from July 1941 to September 1956, during which time his former principal was his associate at U.K.

The other surviving member of that class is the former Anna Greenlee, now Mrs. John Coburn. Her husband is Dr. Donovan's cousin.

Found with the Bulletin in the Ledger's job printer was a "New Year's Greeting" card of January 1907. It pictures the Minerva College pupils of 1856 who attended the "Semi-Centennial Banquet given in their honor, May 11, 1906."

Pictured are Mary Kirk Winter, E. F. Boyd, Thomas J. Winter, Mary Bagby Boswell, Tuce Robertson Frazee, D. F. Frazee, S. A. Frazee, Alice Thompson Boyd, Sallie Kirk Boyd and Lizzie Robertson Frazee