

**NJS Presents*****The 2020 Paul A. Stellhorn New Jersey History Award Winning Undergraduate Papers*****In this Issue:*****The Origins of Centenary Collegiate Institute:******A Story of Industrialization, Wealth, and Natural Resources*****By Sean Graham****DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14713/njs.v7i1.234>**

*The Paul A. Stellhorn Undergraduate Paper in New Jersey History Award was established in 2004 to honor Paul A. Stellhorn (1947-2001), a distinguished historian and public servant who worked for the New Jersey Historical Commission, the New Jersey Committee (now Council) for the Humanities, and the Newark Public Library. The Stellhorn Awards consist of a framed certificate and a modest cash award, presented at the New Jersey Historical Commission's Annual Conference. The Award's sponsors are the New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance; the New Jersey Historical Commission, New Jersey Department of State; Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries; and the New Jersey Caucus, Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. The Stellhorn Award Committee members are Richard Waldron (chair), Mark Lender, and Peter Mickulas. The advisory committee consists of Ron Becker, Karl Niederer, Elsalyn Palmisano, and Fred Pachman. Click [here](#) for more information. The following paper was one of two 2020 winners.*

Every fall when new students arrive on Centenary University's campus they are told the story of how Centenary Collegiate Institute (CCI) came to be built in Hackettstown. The story goes that the Newark Methodist Conference, in charge of building the school, established a competition to determine the school's location. Ten northern New Jersey towns applied, and the conference

selected Hackettstown after ten selfless town citizens donated \$10,000 and ten acres of land to the conference. However, through archival research, I have found that the history of the school's founding is much more complex than the story told in the short narrative read at ceremonies. The founding of Centenary Collegiate Institute in Hackettstown was not only because of the donation by the local citizens, but also due to the town's transportation infrastructure, wealth, water supply, and its local Methodist Church. The story of Centenary's founding is more than a local northern New Jersey history. It represents a microcosm of state and national history at a time of industrialization and urban development which occurred throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As in any history, causation is more complex than one factor. Instead, causation is made up of multiple factors. This concept can be applied to the decision to locate Centenary in Hackettstown. Rather than accepting the standard narrative that the decision was based on donations from 10 local men, the choice was actually caused by a blend of five factors. The first factor was that Hackettstown had a train station on the Morris & Essex Railroad, which made the town accessible from anywhere in the tri-state area. The second factor was the vibrant economy of Hackettstown, with the businesses and medical professionals needed to support the needs of students. Third, the region boasted a healthful water supply, sourced from the famous springs of Schooley's Mountain. The fourth factor was the local Trinity Methodist Church, whose pastor Jonathan T. Crane was on the committee responsible for choosing the winning town. These factors have been well documented in historic newspapers, such as the *Newark Daily Journal* which on September 9, 1874, stated, "the location is noted for its beauty of situation, it's salubrious climate, the excellence in water, and the thrift of its inhabitants."<sup>1</sup> The final factor discussed in this paper is the donation made by the ten founders. In this section, I analyze the life of each of the founders

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<sup>1</sup> *Newark Daily Journal*, Newark, NJ (September 9, 1874), microfilm copy. Collection of the New Jersey State Archive, Trenton New Jersey. The *Newark Daily Journal* was a daily newspaper in Newark NJ from 1861-1887.

and question whether or not some of the founders' intentions were truly selfless. I have organized this paper into eight sections: the first two provide historical context on the founding of CCI and the history of Hackettstown, the next five sections are on each of the factors mentioned above for the school being built in Hackettstown, and in the last section I offer my conclusion as to why Centenary was built in Hackettstown.

### **The Founding of Centenary Collegiate Institute**

In the mid-1860s, Methodist Churches all over the country were collecting funds for building schools and other community programs.<sup>2</sup> This is because 1867 was the hundredth anniversary of Methodism in America. This anniversary prompted the Newark Methodist Conference to meet in Washington, NJ on March 21<sup>st</sup> of 1866, to “establish a seminary in the northern part of the state.”<sup>3</sup> The Newark Methodist Conference was only nine years old at the time, forming as a separate entity from the New Jersey Conference in 1857. For thirty years before the founding of Centenary, the state of New Jersey had a Methodist seminary in Pennington, where both conferences could send youth destined for ministry. In 1865 the Newark Conference decided to give control of the Pennington Seminary to the New Jersey Conference, leaving them without a seminary.<sup>4</sup>

By spring 1867, the conference had attained approval from the state to create the Centenary Collegiate Institute and had appointed a board of trustees. The only decision left was to determine the school's location. The conference decided to choose the location of the school based on which town in Northern New Jersey provided the best bid. The towns that participated in this bidding

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<sup>2</sup> Ernest Dalton, *The History of Hackettstown* (Hackettstown Historical Society 1978), 112-120.

<sup>3</sup> “M.E. Conference,” *Hackettstown Gazette*, March 29, 1866. Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm. The *Hackettstown Gazette* was a weekly paper printed in Hackettstown from 1857-1974.

<sup>4</sup> *The Story of New Jersey Volume IV*, (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1945), 495-498.

process included Bernardsville, Flanders, Washington, Irvington, Hackettstown, Orange, Plainfield, Newark, Madison, and Morristown.<sup>5</sup>

The process was competitive between the towns, with many of them writing about the process in the local newspapers to encourage donations. Hackettstown was motivated to win, as demonstrated in articles in the weekly newspaper the *Hackettstown Gazette*. Below are excerpts from the newspaper which show the town's dedication to the project:

“With our climate and beautiful surroundings we hope to win. Let us make a long and strong pull for this important institution.”<sup>6</sup> -December 6, 1866

“No location is as desirable for this Seminary as Hackettstown.”<sup>7</sup> -June 20, 1867

“Reverend J.M. Tuttle from the conference favored our place. He said that the site was fine, the country healthy, and the location central.”<sup>8</sup> -March 28, 1867

Hackettstown was not the only town whose citizens wanted the school to be located in their community. New Jersey politician Cornelius Walsh from Bernardsville offered 300 acres, Morristown offered ten acres, and Judge Potts from Madison offered \$20,000.<sup>9</sup> Madison's offer was originally accepted by the conference in April of 1867, with the contingency that a proper site could be found to build the school.<sup>10</sup> Madison failed to meet this contingency, resulting in the conference searching for another town. Six months after Madison failed to meet this contingency for the Newark Methodist Conference, Drew University was founded as a Methodist Seminary in

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<sup>5</sup> Dalton, *The History of Hackettstown*, 115.

<sup>6</sup> “The Seminary,” *Hackettstown Gazette*, December 6, 1866. Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm.

<sup>7</sup> “Proposed Location of the M.E. Seminary,” *Hackettstown Gazette*, (June 20, 1867). Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm.

<sup>8</sup> “Conference,” *Hackettstown Gazette* (March 28, 1867). Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm.

<sup>9</sup> Leila Custard, *Through Golden Years* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1947), 7.

<sup>10</sup> *The Story of New Jersey Volume IV* (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1945), 495-498.

Madison due to a generous donation from Daniel Drew.<sup>11</sup> Currently there has been little historical research regarding why two Methodist seminaries were founded in the same year less than forty miles apart from one another. A point of further research is to compare the timeline of the founding of Drew and Centenary to analyze a correlation between these schools' foundings.

After Madison failed to become the location of the institute, the conference spent the next year traveling to the other competing towns looking for a proper location. Another town highly considered was Morristown, which offered ten acres of land for the seminary. However, the conference did not find this land to be suitable either. The final decision to build Centenary Collegiate Institute in Hackettstown came on April 16, 1868 when the committee responsible for choosing the location of the school visited the town and was given the donation of \$10,000 and ten acres of land by the ten Hackettstown citizens.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to my research, it was commonly thought that the citizens donated because they were part of the Methodist church. However, after studying obituaries and personal writings it seems that the organizer of the series of transactions, William Johnson, and three other funders were not Methodist, but Presbyterian.<sup>13</sup> Organizer William L. Johnson convinced nine other Hackettstown men to donate \$4,000 to a fund for the upcoming school.<sup>14</sup> With this \$40,000 the men set aside \$10,000 to be donated to the Newark Conference and bought thirty acres of farmland at \$500 an acre. Ten of these acres were given to the Newark Conference and the remaining twenty acres were sold in a private auction limited to the ten funders. Only the four Presbyterian funders, the

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Sammartino, *A History of Higher Education in New Jersey* (Cranbury: A.S. Barnes and Co Publishing, 1978), 71-78.

<sup>12</sup> Custard, *Through Golden Years*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Warren Republican*, Hackettstown, NJ (Valentine Obituary: August 20, 1886. George Johnson Obituary: October 25, 1889. William Johnson Obituary: June 26, 1891. Curtis Obituary: November 29, 1913), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

<sup>14</sup> "William Johnson Obituary," *The Warren Republican*, June 26, 1891. Accessed through Hackettstown Historical Society.  
Dalton, *The History of Hackettstown*, 118.

Johnson brothers, Curtis, and Valentine, bought land during this auction.<sup>15</sup> The other six men, who were all Methodist, did not purchase land in the auction yet still made a profit of \$300 from the entire series of transactions.<sup>16</sup> This profit was due to the increase in the land value due to the town building roads, sidewalks, and water pipes in the area for the upcoming school. It is interesting that the Presbyterian men are the only four that bought land during this auction. If the men were doing it truly for the good of the church, why would they not give the other twenty acres surrounding the newly developed area to the upcoming school? Later in this paper I will discuss their possible motivations for donating to the school.

The cornerstone for the five-story building of Centenary Collegiate Institute was laid on September 9, 1869. The man hired to construct the building was Alpheus Clawson, one of the Hackettstown men who donated to the school. The building was dedicated on September 9, 1874, five years after the cornerstone was laid.<sup>17</sup> Five thousand people attended the dedication ceremony and speakers included the governor of New Jersey, ministers from across the country, and other prestigious individuals.<sup>18</sup>

### **The History of Hackettstown**

Today, Hackettstown is a community of 9,500 residents located on 3.7 square miles of land in Warren County, New Jersey. The towns surrounding Hackettstown are largely agricultural communities. Hackettstown, however, gains most of its tax revenue based on businesses and industry. In 2018 the town was home to over sixty different businesses.<sup>19</sup> These businesses include everything from national chains to mom and pop stores. The town also has a large industrial

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<sup>15</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County, New Jersey*. Printed New York 1874. Reprinted by Harmony Press, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Dalton, *The History of Hackettstown*, 117.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>18</sup> *The Newark Daily Journal*, September 10, 1874. Accessed through state archive on microfilm.

<sup>19</sup> Hackettstown Bid 2017 Report, February 17, 2018.

footprint, the most famous being MARS, which has produced M&Ms in the town since 1958. MARS alone employs 1,200 people from the region to work in its Hackettstown factory.<sup>20</sup>

The land was first settled in 1754, when Obadiah Ayers purchased the 1,200 acres of land which made up the community.<sup>21</sup> In 1760, a man by the name of John Hackett came to the town to manage real estate in the region. John Hackett was one of the first prominent citizens in the area, leading the name Hackettstown to first appear on a map of the region in 1768. Although the region gained the name Hackettstown in the late 1760s, it still remained part of the eastern province of Independence Township until formal recognition in 1853.<sup>22</sup> After the town's recognition the Morris and Essex railroad built a train station there in 1854. This rail line, which connected Hackettstown to Pennsylvania and New York, made Hackettstown into an industrial town. An effect of industry in the town was that the population of the community nearly doubled from 1,351 in 1860 to 2,502 in 1880.<sup>23</sup> Although 2,500 may sound like a small population, it is estimated that in the 1880s only one in every four Americans lived in a town of over 2,500 people.<sup>24</sup> Hackettstown was bigger than many other prominent towns in the state, including its competitor for CCI's location, Madison, which only had a population of 1,637 in 1870.<sup>25</sup> Hackettstown is often seen as a small community, because it has only 3.7 square miles of land compared to neighboring townships, such as Mansfield, which owns thirty square miles of land. Even with less land, the community of Hackettstown has historically and currently boasted a larger population. This is

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<sup>20</sup> Steve Novak, "M&M's now greet visitors to N.J. town where they're made," *Lehigh Valley Live*, August 9, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> George Cummins, "History of Hackettstown NJ." In *History of Warren County NJ* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911).

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Dalton, "Hackettstown." In *Historical Sites of Warren County* (Published by the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders, 1965), 59-60.

<sup>23</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Dalton, *History of Centenary*, unpublished manuscripts; written October 1982. Accessed through Centenary University Archives.

<sup>25</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County, New Jersey*. Printed New York 1874. Reprinted by Harmony Press, 1994.

because Hackettstown's existence is dependent on manufacturing and selling goods for the towns which surround the community.

### **The Morris and Essex Railroad**

Before the days of automobiles, the fastest modes of land transportation of people and goods in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was either by canal or by railroad. Hackettstown was fortunate in the fact that they had both forms of transportation present in the tiny community. The reason for the abundance of transportation is due to Hackettstown's geographical location west of New York City and northeast of Phillipsburg. The goal of both the canal and the railroad was to connect the transportation hub of Phillipsburg NJ, located on the Delaware River across from Easton PA, to the transportation hub of Jersey City NJ, located on the Hudson River across from New York City.<sup>26</sup>

The Morris Canal was completed in 1831, reaching from Phillipsburg to Newark, and was expanded in 1836 to reach Jersey City.<sup>27</sup> The canal's construction cost two million dollars and was built thirty-two feet wide and four feet deep. The canal was 102 miles long and could transport people and goods from Phillipsburg to Jersey City in a matter of five days.<sup>28</sup> The primary good carried was coal, mined in Pennsylvania, which was needed by the people in the city. The peak of the canal's use was from 1855 to 1880 when the canal averaged at least 450,000 tons of cargo a year. The peak year of tonnage was in 1866 when the canal shipped 889,220 tons of cargo; 459,175 of the cargo being coal.<sup>29</sup> The canal made early industrialization in Hackettstown possible by providing resources that are not found in the region such as coal.

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<sup>26</sup> Harold Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown, New Jersey 1754-1955* (Easton: Correll Printing, 1955), 17- 52.

<sup>27</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Kaltata, *A Hundred Years a Hundred Miles: New Jersey's Morris Canal* (Farming Hills: Compton Press, 1983), 311.

<sup>29</sup> Kaltata, *A Hundred Years a Hundred Miles*, 402.

The canal, however, lost popularity after the Morris and Essex Railroad from Philipsburg to Hoboken was finished in 1866. The railroad was much faster and more efficient than the canal, and in the next sixty years the canal became less and less popular until it closed in 1924.<sup>30</sup> Although the canal may not have shipped goods and peoples in such a way as the railroad did, it still brought a vital source of energy to the town that would support its economic development. In this way, I consider the canal a secondary cause for why the Newark Conference chose Hackettstown as the site for the school. There is no written account in which the canal is mentioned as motivation for the school to be built, but what is often mentioned is the booming businesses of Hackettstown, which was in part caused by the canal.

The Morris and Essex Railroad was incorporated in 1835 with the intent to connect Hoboken and Phillipsburg. In 1854, the railroad opened from Dover to Hackettstown and in 1866 the railroad reached Phillipsburg.<sup>31</sup> The Hackettstown railroad station connected the community with the world like never before. With the railroad station, it was possible for people, ideas, and material goods to reach the town from all areas of the country. Accessibility was an important factor when the Newark Methodist Conference choose to build Centenary in Hackettstown.<sup>32</sup> The impact the railroad had in convincing the Newark Methodist Conference to build the school in Hackettstown is shown in the following quote from the April 23, 1868 printing of the *Hackettstown Herald*: “The Newark Conference says this selection is said to have been particularly fortunate. Hackettstown is easy to access from all parts of the state, the Morris and Essex connecting it with Newark on the east, and railroads running north and south on the west.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kaltata, *A Hundred Years a Hundred Miles*, 513.

<sup>31</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Dalton, *The History of Centenary* (unpublished), 111-6.

<sup>33</sup> “Conference Seminary,” *Hackettstown Gazette*, Hackettstown, NJ (April 23, 1868), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

If it wasn't for the Morris and Essex railroad it is likely that Centenary would not be located in Hackettstown. The conference wanted the school to be accessible within its territory in the northern part of the state. If the school could not be quickly accessed from Newark by train it would hurt the marketability of the school. Eight out of the ten towns considered by the conference had a railroad station in their town by 1870.<sup>34</sup> The only two towns considered without a railroad station was Irvington, which is located two miles away from the train station in Maplewood, and Flanders, which is located seven miles away from the Hackettstown train station. The conference valued the school's accessibility because in a time before automobiles the train provided the best form of travel. The land donated to the conference by the Hackettstown citizens was only two blocks away from the train station, giving the school fantastic accessibility. The citizens of Hackettstown recognized that the railroad gave the community a major advantage as demonstrated in this December 1866 *Hackettstown Gazette* article: "As the Morris and Essex Railroad passes through the central portion of the conference, it will be undoubtedly be located somewhere on the route."<sup>35</sup> The train station was a large motivator in convincing the Newark Conference to build the school in Hackettstown.

The train station has played an active role in Centenary's history. First it was a means of transporting 5,000 people for the opening of the school on September 9, 1874.<sup>36</sup> According to an article in the *Newark Daily Journal* the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad offered special excursion tickets for the event.<sup>37</sup> After the school's opening the railroad continued to be

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<sup>34</sup> Railroad Map of New Jersey published by R. L. Barnes. Accessed through Rutgers online archive; <https://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/HISTORICALMAPS/RAILROADS/Railroads.html>. The following eight towns considered by the Newark Methodist Conference all have railroad stations: Bernardsville, Washington, Hackettstown, Orange, Plainfield, Newark, Madison, and Morristown.

<sup>35</sup> "The Seminary," *Hackettstown Gazette*, December 6, 1866. Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm.

<sup>36</sup> Custard, *Through Golden Years*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Newark Daily Journal*, Newark, NJ (September 10, 1874), microfilm copy. Collection of the New Jersey State Archive, Trenton New Jersey. The Newark Daily Journal was a daily newspaper in Newark NJ from 1861-1887.

used as a marketing strategy. An admissions brochure from June 1895 notes how the school is accessible by the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad.<sup>38</sup> To this day the train station has significant influence on the community. The Hackettstown train station is now the end of New Jersey Transit's Morristown and Montclair-Boonton line which connects the community to New York City. Many community members rely on the train station to commute from Hackettstown to the city for work. On the other end, many Centenary students rely on the rail line to commute to Hackettstown for school. The Hackettstown train station has had a lasting effect on the history of Centenary and of Hackettstown.

### **Wealth in Hackettstown**

One of the factors the conference stated for Hackettstown being chosen was the "thrif of its inhabitants."<sup>39</sup> It is important when building any college that it is located in a town with a healthy economy. A town's economy affects the condition of roads, the availability of public transportation, the accessibility of medical professionals, and many other factors that are important to any college. Hackettstown's economy was one of the most vibrant of all neighboring towns. Hackettstown's economic success has largely to do with its transportation networks, which go back to 1801 when the Morris Turnpike was incorporated as a road from Morristown to Philipsburg.<sup>40</sup> This transportation network allowed Jacob Day to establish the first carriage manufacture in the town in 1815.<sup>41</sup> As the town established better transportation systems with the development of the canal and railroad, Main Street in Hackettstown began to form into an

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<sup>38</sup> Raymond Frey, *Centenary College, New Jersey* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 20. Advertisement is copied in this 2012 book written on the school's history.

<sup>39</sup> *Newark Daily Journal*, Newark, NJ (September 9, 1874), microfilm copy. Collection of the New Jersey State Archive, Trenton New Jersey. The *Newark Daily Journal* was a daily newspaper in Newark NJ from 1861-1887.

<sup>40</sup> Leonard Frank & Raymond Lemasters, *Historic Main Street, Hackettstown New Jersey* (Easton: Harmony Press, 2006), 2

<sup>41</sup> Raymond Lemasters, *A History of the Carriage Industry: Hackettstown New Jersey* (Winnipeg: Art Bookbindery, 2018), 39

industrial center with four carriage manufactures and over twenty stores. In 1874, there were sixty-two businesses registered in the small community. Twenty-three of these businesses sold goods and services ranging from clothes, shoes, jewelry, medicine, dry goods, groceries, furniture, stoves, and pianos.<sup>42</sup> In 1881, there was more merchandise shipped from Hackettstown than any other station on the Morris and Essex Railroad in Warren County.<sup>43</sup>

The best description of Hackettstown's economy was in the unpublished *History of Centenary College*, by Ernest Dalton, who stated, "old maps and business directories serve to show Hackettstown as a community whose chief function was to serve the farming population of the surrounding area."<sup>44</sup> Many neighboring towns had few merchants and relied on Hackettstown to provide goods and services. Hackettstown had the infrastructure and professionals needed to serve the community. This was very attractive when choosing to locate the school, because the community had the businesses and professionals needed to serve the needs of the students.

The result of the thriving town was ever-improving infrastructure and services. In 1855 the First National Bank of Hackettstown was established, with George Roe as the cashier.<sup>45</sup> Roe was one of the citizens responsible for donating the \$10,000 and ten acres of land to the Newark Methodist Conference. The bank allowed for further town improvements in the form of business loans. Having a bank was important for the college town because it allowed students to access funds. Another important factor for the conference was that the town boasted a post office. At the time from 1855 to 1871 the postmaster was merchant George W. Johnson.<sup>46</sup> George Johnson was also one of the citizens responsible for donating the \$10,000 and ten acres of land to the Newark

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<sup>42</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County*.

<sup>43</sup> James Snell. *History of Sussex and Warren Counties, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1881), 587.

<sup>44</sup> Dalton, *The History of Centenary* (unpublished), 111-11.

<sup>45</sup> Snell, James. *History of Sussex and Warren Counties*, 590.

<sup>46</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 50.

Methodist Conference. The post office was located in his harness shop on Main Street.<sup>47</sup> The 1869 report by the Board of Trustees to the Newark Conference Seminary discusses the school's compelling location "one-fourth of a mile away from depot and church, post office and shops and stores of a prosperous country town."<sup>48</sup> This evidence confirms that the conference chose Hackettstown in part for its businesses and infrastructure. The town had the capability to support the needs of the students the school would serve. In 1869 the town installed stone sidewalks from campus down Church Street to Main Street.<sup>49</sup> This was to allow students easy access to downtown businesses and services, as well as easy access to the Trinity Methodist church.

Hackettstown did not have the largest economy compared to other towns considered for the school's location. Newark had a population of over 100,000 in 1874 and was a large national trade center.<sup>50</sup> But the conference was not looking for the wealthiest town in which to build the school. They were looking for a town that had the essentials. Hackettstown, with its local stores, post office, bank, and water company, had everything students at the school would need. The conference wanted the school to be built in a place that was healthy and close to nature, but also had transportation and services the students would need. Hackettstown fit this description with its beautiful mountain surroundings and its thriving Main Street just a quarter mile away from the school.

### **Hackettstown's Water Supply**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wealthy individuals from the city frequently visited Hackettstown and the surrounding area due to the fame of the spring water from Schooley's Mountain.<sup>51</sup> Schooley's

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<sup>47</sup> James, Snell, *History of Sussex and Warren Counties*, 590.

<sup>48</sup> Dalton, *The History of Centenary* (unpublished), 111-5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-6.

<sup>50</sup> F.W. Beers, *County Atlas of Warren County*.

<sup>51</sup> Dorianne Perrucci, *Morris County: The Progress of Its Legend* (Woodland Hills: Windsor Publications, 1984), 51-53.

Mountain is located in neighboring Washington Township of Morris County. Schooley's Mountain provided one of the most famous water sources in northern New Jersey due to its cleanliness and perceived health benefits. Experts agreed, and "In 1815 Dr. Jackson and Dr. McNevin, of the University of New York, declared it the purest in the country."<sup>52</sup> As a result, Schooley's Mountain became a popular summer resort in New Jersey, resulting in a handful of hotels being built in the region. The most famous were Belmont Hall and the Health House. The Belmont Hotel of Schooley's Mountain had many distinguished guests, including the 11<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States, George Dallas.<sup>53</sup> The popularity of the region gained more momentum when the Morris and Essex Railroad reached Hackettstown in 1854. Carriages waited at the train station to carry passengers to the hotels of the region.<sup>54</sup>

The Hackettstown Aqueduct Company was created in 1853 by five Hackettstown businessmen. One of those men was William L. Johnson, the Hackettstown citizen responsible for organizing the donation to the Newark Methodist Conference.<sup>55</sup> In 1864 the charter had two small reservoirs in the western end of town by the canal, but both of these lacked the pressure needed to meet the town's needs. In 1868, the town purchased all the stock in the company to create a new reservoir on Schooley's Mountain. This allowed the town to tell the conference that they had some of the purest and healthiest water in the nation.

The Newark Methodist Conference wanted Centenary's building to be advanced for its time. The original Centenary Collegiate Institute building was five stories tall and included dorms for 120 students, classrooms, library, cafeteria, church, and nine pianos.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, much of

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<sup>52</sup> *History of Morris County: New Jersey 1739-1882* (Originally Published 1882; New York: W.W. Munsell; Reprinted 1967; New Vernon: Morris County Historical Society), 379-380.

<sup>53</sup> *History of Morris County*, 379-380.

<sup>54</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 185.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>56</sup> Custard, *Through Golden Years*, 17.

the information regarding this building was lost in the fire of October 31, 1899 which burned down the building and the school's archive. The building was lighted and heated by gas and had water, bathtubs, and toilets on each floor.<sup>57</sup> In order to construct such a modern building clean and accessible water was essential.

The water at Schooley's Mountain was a large influence in building the school in Hackettstown. On the opening of the School on September 9, 1874 the *Newark Daily Journal* stated that "the location is noted for its beauty of situation, its salubrious climate, the excellence of water, and the thrift of its inhabitants."<sup>58</sup> The resorts of Schooley's Mountain lost popularity at the turn of the 20th century. There are very few sources on and remnants of these resorts in the region. The region of Washington Township that surrounds Schooley's Mountain remains largely undeveloped to this day.

Schooley's Mountain was a factor for building the seminary in Hackettstown, but the area also provided a reason to locate the new college elsewhere. Two years before the laying of the corner stone for Centenary Collegiate Institute in Hackettstown, a Presbyterian Seminary was opened in Schooley's Mountain.<sup>59</sup> The Seminary opened in 1867 and closed when it burned down in 1881.<sup>60</sup> The grounds were rebuilt in 1889 as a hotel with a hundred rooms known as the Forest Grove House. At the height of the school it had over 200 male and female students attending.<sup>61</sup> The people of Hackettstown worried that this Presbyterian seminary would ruin their chances of being chosen, due to the school's close proximity to each other. In August of 1867, when the

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<sup>57</sup> Snell, James. *History of Sussex and Warren Counties, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1881), 587.

<sup>58</sup> *Newark Daily Journal*, Newark, NJ (September 9, 1874), microfilm copy. Collection of the New Jersey State Archive, Trenton New Jersey. The *Newark Daily Journal* was a daily newspaper in Newark NJ from 1861-1887.

<sup>59</sup> F.W. Beers, *Atlas of Morris County New Jersey* (Original Printed in Philadelphia 1868, Reprinted Morristown 1990).

<sup>60</sup> "Morris County," Princeton University Library, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://library.princeton.edu/njmaps/counties/morris.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 185.

conference first announced the school's location in Morristown or Madison, the *Hackettstown Gazette* blamed the loss on the Schooley's Mountain Seminary.

The Seminary of the Newark Methodist Conference will be located at Morristown or Madison, and now a Seminary of a high order is to be opened within a few weeks on Schooley's Mountain, so near to us, and possessing so many of the advantages and attractions as to location, healthfulness, etc. that is hardly probable a rival institution can be started here. This we apprehend is the fact, and while we allude to it with disappointment, we feel bound in honor and justice to say that if a Seminary could not be located here, there could be found no other place more attractive, more desirable, and (for our citizens) more convenient than Schooley's Mountain.<sup>62</sup>  
—Hackettstown Gazette; August 8, 1867

From this abstraction, it is clear that the *Hackettstown Gazette* blamed the loss of the competition on the Schooley's Mountain Seminary. Both towns were easily accessible, had a great economy, and had clean water from Schooley's Mountain. A brochure, created on August 17, 1867 by Schooley's Mountain Seminary President Reverend Stoutenburgh, stated the school was desirable because it was "about half a mile from the celebrated mineral springs. It is but three miles from Hackettstown whence railroad communication extends to almost every part of the state."<sup>63</sup> The Schooley's Mountain Seminary offered many of the same courses that would be offered at Centenary Collegiate Institute.<sup>64</sup> The Schooley's Mountain Seminary is significant because not only does it show how the neighboring region was a factor against Centenary being built in Hackettstown, but also because it gives insight into what made the region appealing for a school. The pamphlet for the Schooley's Mountain Seminary cited the same factors of transportation, business, and water that I have used to form my argument of why Hackettstown was chosen as the

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<sup>62</sup> "A New Seminary," *Hackettstown Gazette*, August 8, 1867. Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm.

<sup>63</sup> "Schooley's Mountain Seminary," August 17, 1867. Accessed online through Rutgers University Library on November 21, 2018. <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/31415/>.

<sup>64</sup> "Schooley's Mountain Seminary," August 17, 1867.

site of Centenary Collegiate Institute. It seems as though these factors of accessibility, wealth, and cleanliness are important for other school's origin in the region as well.

### **Methodism in Hackettstown**

In addition to the geographical, transportation, and health benefits of the region cited above, Reverent Jonathan Townley Crane of the Trinity Methodist Church played an important role in bringing Centenary to Hackettstown. Hackettstown was home to four churches in the 1874.<sup>65</sup> The oldest was the First Presbyterian Church of Hackettstown, which was established in 1764, only ten years after Obadiah Ayers purchased the 1,200 acres of land which comprised the community.<sup>66</sup> The Presbyterian church was one of the first organizations in the colonial agricultural community, and most of the founders of the community were Presbyterian, including Obadiah Ayers and John Hackett.<sup>67</sup> It was not until 1832 that a second church, the Trinity Methodist Church, was established in the town.

Like the Presbyterian Church, Trinity Church was built on Main Street.<sup>68</sup> The location of the church was particularly appealing because it was only three blocks away from the proposed site of the school. One of the conditions the conference made when choosing Hackettstown in April 16, 1868, as stated in their minutes, was that the town “provide a good walk of stone or plank from Main Street to Jefferson Street.”<sup>69</sup> The street that would be built in the late 1860s to meet this condition was named Church Street, since it connected the Trinity Methodist Church on Main Street to the school on Jefferson Street.<sup>70</sup> Although there was a chapel built in the original CCI

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<sup>65</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County*.

<sup>66</sup> George Cummins, “History of Hackettstown NJ.” In *History of Warren County NJ* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1911).

<sup>67</sup> Snell, James. *History of Sussex and Warren Counties*, 586.

<sup>68</sup> Leonard Frank & Raymond Lemasters, *Historic Main Street, Hackettstown New Jersey* (Easton: Harmony Press, 2006), 55.

<sup>69</sup> Custard, *Through Golden Years*, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Dalton, *The History of Centenary* (unpublished), 111-5.

building, the Newark Methodist Conference wanted a community Methodist chapel located close by so it could also be used by students.

The Trinity Methodist Church was responsible for collecting donations from town citizens in order to have the school built. On April 23, 1868, Reverend Jonathan T. Crane stated, “We trust all will see the importance of giving liberally, thereby securing its location.”<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Townley Crane (1819-1880) was pastor of the Trinity Methodist Church from 1867 to 1868, the same years as the competition for the school’s location.<sup>72</sup> Crane was also a member of the Newark Methodist Conference and was on the committee responsible for choosing the town to locate the school.<sup>73</sup> Of the ten people on this committee, Crane was the only one who was a Methodist reverend in one of the towns competing for the school.<sup>74</sup> This seems something of a conflict of interest, having the reverend of the town’s Methodist Church on the committee responsible for choosing the location of the school. After the location was decided upon, Jonathan Crane became a trustee of the upcoming school and was placed on the committee responsible for constructing the original CCI building.<sup>75</sup> Crane only served two years as a trustee, however, his impact on the series of transactions cannot be overstated. It was he who convinced the conference to consider Hackettstown and also convinced the citizens of Hackettstown to donate to the cause.<sup>76</sup> This leads one to wonder why he was so supportive of Hackettstown. Jonathan Crane spent most of his life in Newark, one of the towns competing against Hackettstown in the competition for the school.

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<sup>71</sup> “Conference Seminary,” *Hackettstown Gazette*, Hackettstown, NJ (April 23, 1868), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

<sup>72</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 138.

<sup>73</sup> *The Story of New Jersey Volume IV* (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1945), 495-498.

<sup>74</sup> “Methodist Conference,” *Hackettstown Gazette*, Hackettstown, NJ (April 4, 1867), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

<sup>75</sup> *The Story of New Jersey Volume IV*, 495-498.

<sup>76</sup> Snell, James. *History of Sussex and Warren Counties*, 587.

Regardless of what his motivation was, his ties to the Newark Methodist Conference gave the town an advantage that the competitors didn't have.

Jonathan Townley Crane is most famous for being father of Stephen Crane (1871-1900). Stephen Crane was born on November 1, 1871 in Newark, New Jersey and became one of America's most famous authors with his novel *The Red Badge of Courage*.<sup>77</sup> Stephen's sister Agnes Crane (1856-1884) graduated from Centenary Collegiate Institute in 1880 as valedictorian and was one of the first to teach Stephen to read and write.<sup>78</sup> Jonathan seemed to have high respect for Centenary Collegiate Institute considering he sent two of his daughters to the school for an education.

### **The Ten Hackettstown Citizens**

The final reason Centenary Collegiate Institute was built in Hackettstown was because of the donation by the ten Hackettstown citizens. I purposefully wanted to discuss the donation last because it is often thought of as the single cause for the school being built in Hackettstown. Factors such as transportation, economics, water supply, and the local Methodist church are often overlooked causes for the school being built because of the simplicity of legend. I believe these factors are just as important as the ten Hackettstown citizens, because without these other factors the town would be unsuitable for a college. I am not arguing that the donation of these citizens was unimportant, however, but as with any historical event there are multiple causes. The purpose of this section is to describe the ten citizens who funded the school and to analyze their potential motivation for doing so.

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<sup>77</sup> Raymond Lemasters, *A History of the Carriage Industry: Hackettstown New Jersey* (Winnipeg: Art Bookbindery, 2018), 39.

<sup>78</sup> Paul Sorrentino, "Newly Discovered Writings of Mary Helen Peck Crane and Agnes Elizabeth Crane," *The Courier* 21.1 (1986): 103-34.

As previously mentioned, the donation was organized by merchant William L. Johnson (1817-1891).<sup>79</sup> William Johnson convinced nine other Hackettstown men to donate the money for the upcoming school. One of the other men who donated was his brother and business partner George W. Johnson (1819-1889). William and George Johnson were two of the wealthiest individuals in town, collectively owning nineteen properties in 1874.<sup>80</sup> Their success in the community began in 1838 when they opened a harness shop under the firm name W.L. & G.W. Johnson.<sup>81</sup> In 1848, they expanded their firm to sell dry goods, groceries, and hardware.<sup>82</sup> In 1854, the company had \$15,000 of inventory that consisted of dry goods, groceries, hardware, crockery, drugs, paints, oil, flour, fish, salt, iron, boots, shoes, harness, whips, and collars. The amount of sales per year was \$34,000, the equivalent of over one million dollars in 2020.<sup>83</sup>

The two men were involved in funding many community improvement projects such as the water company, bank, and the town cemetery.<sup>84</sup> What is fascinating regarding their donation to the Newark Methodist Conference was that neither of these men were Methodist. They both belonged to the Presbyterian Church.<sup>85</sup> Considering there was already a Presbyterian Seminary established three miles to the east, in Washington, the men would likely have no religious motivation to build a competing seminary in Hackettstown. Thus, it seems probable that these men were most likely motivated by finances. They knew a school so close to Main Street would bring three hundred more customers into their stores. Not only would they profit from their stores, they also made money from purchasing land surrounding the college in the private auction. The

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<sup>79</sup> Dalton, *The History of Hackettstown*, 118.

<sup>80</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County*.

<sup>81</sup> "William L. Johnson Passes Away," *Warren Republican*, Hackettstown, NJ (June 26, 1891), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

<sup>82</sup> "George W. Johnson Obituary," *Warren Republican*, Hackettstown, NJ (October 25, 1889), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

<sup>83</sup> Raymond, Lemasters, *A History of the Carriage Industry*, 112.

<sup>84</sup> *Warren Republican*, Hackettstown, NJ.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

Johnsons bought most of this land which went from Main Street to Jefferson Street.<sup>86</sup> This land they purchased in auction went up in value due to the town building streets, sidewalks, and water pipes in the area for the upcoming school.

The Johnsons were not the only funders of the Seminary who were not Methodist. Lawyer Caleb H. Valentine (1838-1886) and tailor Joshua H. Curtis (1830-1913) also belonged to the Presbyterian Church.<sup>87</sup> They were the only other men to purchase land surrounding the seminary in the private auction between the funders.<sup>88</sup> These four men individually owned more property in the town than all the Methodist funders combined. It seems as though for these four men the donation may have been motivated with the intent of buying farmland for cheap and turning it into the expensive residential property. Proving intention in historical research is very difficult, which is why I don't want to make the argument that these four wealthy Presbyterian funders only donated for the potential profit. Although I know their religious affiliation at the end of their life from their obituaries, these funders could have switched from being Methodist, or maybe they didn't care about the religious affiliation for the school and made the donation for the love of learning. Regardless of their intentions, the fact remains that these four funders organized the donation and purchased the twenty remaining acres surrounding the school.<sup>89</sup>

As for the motivations of the other six donors, all of whom were Methodist, it is equally difficult to determine their motivation for donating. The other six men did not purchase land in the auction, but still made a profit of \$300 from the entire series of transactions.<sup>90</sup> Although they may have made a profit, I would speculate that most of these Methodist men donated for the good of

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<sup>86</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County, New Jersey*. Printed New York 1874. Reprinted by Harmony Press, 1994.

<sup>87</sup> *Warren Republican*, Hackettstown, NJ (Valentine Obituary: August 20, 1886. Curtis Obituary: November 29, 1913), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

<sup>88</sup> F.W. Beers. *County Atlas of Warren County*.

<sup>89</sup> Dalton, *The History of Hackettstown*, 117.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*.

the community. Many of these men were important community figures. For example, carpenter Alpheus Clawson (1819-1904) served as mayor of the town from 1862-63 and again from 1871-73.<sup>91</sup> However, Clawson also benefited economically from the school being built in Hackettstown since his construction firm, Clawson & Hazen, was hired to build the original CCI building.<sup>92</sup> The reason for mentioning the motivation of these funders is not to devalue their contribution for the school. Rather, it is to paint a better picture of the role the ten funders had in the community. Many of these men were important in improving the infrastructure and business life of the town. The other Methodist funders were mill owner Isaac Crane (1818-1896), banker George Roe (1824-1886), grocery store owner Jacob Welsh (1827-1874), foundry owner Robert Q. Bowers (1831-1906), and farmer David Shields (1815-1885).<sup>93</sup> Together these ten men were some of the wealthiest and most influential in the community. If it wasn't for the infrastructure these men developed, and the donation they created for the conference, it is likely that Centenary would not be located in Hackettstown. These ten men are an important part of the school's history, and therefore it is good that their names are read at every commencement ceremony. Even if there was a financial motivation for donating to the conference, the men should still be commemorated for their active role in building the community of Hackettstown into the thriving community it is today.

## Conclusion

Hackettstown was chosen due to multiple factors that were appealing to the Newark Methodist Conference. It is possible that there are many other factors in this decision that did not emerge in my research. Due to the school's fire in 1899 there is limited information regarding the

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<sup>91</sup> Nunn, *The Story of Hackettstown*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> "Alpheus Clawson Obituary," *Hackettstown Gazette*, November 18, 1904 Accessed through Warren County Library on microfilm.

<sup>93</sup> *Warren Republican*, Hackettstown, NJ (Crane Obituary: May 10, 1896. Roe Obituary: April 23, 1886. Bowers Obituary: December 28, 1906. Shields Obituary: November 27, 1885), microfilm copy. Collection of the Warren County Public Library, Belvidere New Jersey.

founding of the school. The five factors that I have presented were the ones that were most apparent in town newspaper clippings and surviving testaments on the transaction. It is impossible to state which one of these factors is more important than others due to limited primary source accounts from the period. I would argue all five of these factors are important in the school being built in Hackettstown, but the question of which was most important is impossible to answer based on the remaining sources from the period.

The first factor in choosing Hackettstown was the Morris & Essex Railroad which made the town accessible from any part of the country. The Newark Conference valued accessibility, as demonstrated by the fact that eight of the ten towns considered had railroad stations. The second factor was the town's strong economy. The transportation networks through the region gave the town an economic advantage over many other communities in the state. This resulted in a thriving economy which had all the goods and services needed to support students. The third factor was the famous water sourced from Schooley's Mountain which many believed to be the cleanest and healthiest in the State. Having this spring water piped to the town was a motivator in choosing Hackettstown to build Centenary. The fourth factor was the Trinity Methodist Church's close proximity to the proposed site of the school. And finally, there were the ten Hackettstown citizens who donated the \$10,000 and ten acres of land to the school. It is the combination of these five factors that likely caused Centenary Collegiate Institute to be built in Hackettstown.

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