

The Professor, the Bishop, and the Country Squire

In 1935 in preparation for the 75th anniversary of the founding of the College, George H. Genzmer, librarian and lecturer in English at Bard, compiled a chronology (which he entitled "Annals of the College") running from the College's earliest beginnings up as far as 1918. This chronology is more precise in its dating and covers a wider area of the College's life than any other historical treatment of Bard.

Mr. Genzmer starts his list of the dates of the events which led up to the founding of the College, with the year 1787, the birth of John McVickar. Of the three men — John McVickar, Bishop Horatio Potter, and John Bard — whose efforts brought the College into being, McVickar was the spearhead, and it was his persistent work over a decade that resulted in its establishment. John McVickar was the son of an Irish immigrant merchant who had made himself rich in downtown New York. John was educated at Columbia, ordained in the Episcopal Church, and appointed rector of St. James' Church, Hyde Park. Returning to Columbia to teach, he was the dominant personality on that faculty for 50 years, and often considered to be the outstanding clergyman in the Episcopal Diocese of New York. He was several times a candidate for the presidency of Columbia, failing to win the office perhaps because of "something in his personality which repelled rather than attracted popular approval, an excessive correctness and frigidity, a certain removal from human sympathy." But on the other hand, he was the friend of leading literary and political figures of America and Europe.¹ He is described as "restless, indefatigable, and inquisitive," giving himself to a "wide range of pursuits" at a time "of early springtime, of ardent hopes and undisillusioned aspirations in the life of a great city. . . ."²

And there were three special reasons why John McVickar was a particularly important figure in the movement which resulted in the founding of St. Stephen's College.

First, he was married to Eliza Bard, the daughter of Dr. Samuel Bard of Hyde Park — and thus a member of one of the great families of the New York City-Hudson River Estate Community — and he was an uncle by marriage of John Bard of Annandale.

Second, one of his most passionate interests was the increase in the number of Episcopal ministers. He was committed to one way above all others to further this objective, namely to find sincere young men of good character (and usually modest finances) and to help them obtain first a college and then a seminary education.

Third, John McVickar was the most influential member, a charter trustee, and for a long time the Superintendent of the Society for Promoting Religion and Learning. This was an off-shoot of the great landed endowments of Trinity Church, New York City, established in 1839 as a separate corporation for the purpose of supporting the college and seminary training of aspirants for the ministry. Its assets consisted of lands in downtown New York, and in the 1850's were yielding \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year. (A century later the assets had increased to over a million dollars and the annual income to nearly \$100,000.)³ The Society's steady, firm support proved to be the determinative factor in bringing St. Stephen's College into existence. "This Church institution" McVickar declared to the New York Diocesan Convention the year before his death "may be said to be the child of the Society for Promoting Religion and Learning. . . ."⁴

Clergyman though he was, McVickar had also a merchant's blood in his veins and it always gladdened his heart to see the way that capital appreciated over the years, enlarging both the income and the scope of the programs of an endowed religious or educational organization. In 1860 he told the New York Diocesan Convention:

"It is a wise policy in our new country of permanent landed endowment for the future support of the Church and a growing provision for its coming needs as the population of our land advances. Thus for example, the landed property of the Society now reporting and from the proceeds of which now flows such an ample share of Christian bounty, was within the memory of living man—nay, of him who now reports this fact,—hardly sufficient to meet the full support of a single scholar."⁵

But just as governments in our own day are finding that "throwing money at a problem does not necessarily solve it," so too the Society for Promoting Religion and Learning began by the early 1850's to report "that their funds failed to accomplish the purpose designed, for want of an institution of Churchly objective and atmosphere in which to educate their students. Those whom they had heretofore educated in secular colleges seldom entered the ministry. They were themselves prevented by their charter from investing their money in buildings, but would sustain a Diocesan Church college if someone else would erect the necessary structures. . . ."⁶

McVickar first tried to meet this need in the "chapel-school" of St. Barnabas which he built in Irvington. He secured some contributions from

friends and neighbors, but the main cost of the handsome stone structure fell upon McVickar personally. The new school opened in 1856, and it was announced that in the future it would be known as the College of St. Barnabas.

But after a year or two McVickar could see that the costs of this venture would be substantial and that most of the burden would be his to bear. And also his nephew John Bard was prepared to commit far larger resources to a college at Annandale. So McVickar "decided to transfer from Irvington both his influence and efforts. Henceforth he would devote himself to establishing his proposed college on the Bard estate at Annandale." "The handsome stone structure" in Irvington became St. Barnabas parish church and in 1859 Professor McVickar's son, William, became rector of that parish.

Meanwhile here and there across the country, groups of men were starting small private colleges, following the migration of a population that continued to move inland and westward. American higher education was becoming less "city-centered" all the time. And St. Stephen's College, soon to be established at Annandale-on-Hudson, was part of that pattern.

The three men who teamed together to launch the College were all "men of the Hudson Valley." Potter's family stemmed from Beekman (a village outside of Poughkeepsie, now known as LaGrange); McVickar had settled into the family estates at Hyde Park; and Bard identified with Hyde Park and his own new estate of Blithewood (which he called Annandale). And the identification of the College and the Valley extended even further, for Robert B. Fairbairn, the "Great Warden" of the College's early decades, was the son of a Poughkeepsie mother. Almost always the actions by which the College was brought into being were conceived and planned by John McVickar — and almost always with him in the background — and almost always it was his associates who took the visible steps.⁸

Eventually, in the records of the Diocese and the College, the arrangement under which these three brought the College into being became known as the "tripartite agreement." This was an understanding, informal at first and slowly made more definite, to the effect that the Church as represented by Bishop Potter would recognize the College as an official agency of the Diocese, and commend it for support to Church agencies and to private individuals in the Church; that the Society for Promoting Religion and Learning, as represented by Professor McVickar, would give financial support to the institution and to its students; and that John Bard would be the donor of the necessary land and buildings to get the college into operation. (Interestingly enough, in the preliminary memoranda and resolutions relating to the new

institution, it was referred to not as St. Stephen's College, but as St. Stephen's Hall.)

The launching of St. Stephen's was part of a general rebirth of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. Morals charges against Bishop Benjamin Onderdonk (Bishop 1830-61) had resulted in his being suspended by the House of Bishops from exercising the functions of his office, and over the years two successive Provisional Bishops were appointed to handle his duties. The second of these was Horatio Potter, elected Provisional Bishop in 1854 and Bishop of the Diocese with full authority at Onderdonk's death in 1861. Because of the need to restore the health and morale of the Diocese, Bishop Potter eschewed participation in almost all non-churchly public affairs, concentrating (in true New Testament fashion) on "that which cometh on me daily, the care of all the churches." Horatio Potter was a true conservative, an upholder of established values — so much so that it was said that he dressed in the style of 40 years earlier, and in appearance seemed to be a man of another age.⁹ Seeing St. Stephen's as an arm of the Church, Bishop Potter gave the College his unfaltering support. To the 1856 Diocesan Convention he declared:

"One of the urgent wants of the Diocese is a Church Training School, to take charge of hopeful youth from a very early age, and by faithful intellectual and religious culture, prepare them for the work of the Holy Ministry. 'Without money and without price' it should afford shelter and nurture to the sons of deceased clergymen, and by its economy and wise and earnest training, it should be capable of raising up men of simple habits and earnest hearts, who will shrink from no toil, from no self-denial; who by the manifestation of the truth will commend themselves to every manifestation in the sight of God..."

And at the same convention, Dr. McVickar, in his report as Superintendent of the Society for the Promotion of Religion and Learning, followed up with:

"...the smallness of the number of candidates for orders arises from the want in our Diocese of some Church institution, or Training School in which, as a nursery for the ministry, the destitute sons of our poorer clergy might find a home under Church influences, as well as the sons of zealous laymen — a Church School leading to the ministry, adequately endowed, episcopally governed, and annually reporting to the Convention on its condition."¹⁰

On another occasion, Dr. McVickar was to develop his theme in even greater detail:

"...the Superintendent would...venture to add, above all...as the fruit of a lifelong experience in the education of young men...that...the period of peril is that of college life. To preserve that pure is the great problem of education. Corruption of morals, perversion of principles, seeds of infidelity, begin in those years, and this more especially in our land where collegiate teaching and Christian training are so rarely or fully united. To supply that want for those intended for the sacred ministry of our

church, to fill the vacancy that intervenes between youth and manhood, safely as well as wisely, — to sanctify classical studies, to Christianize physical science, and to make Christian faith the golden thread that runs through all studies and sanctifies all attainments, — this is the single yet all-important end which 'training schools' seek to gain . . ."¹¹

With the Bishop and the Society thus actively embarked upon their respective roles under the Tripartite Agreement, we turn now to the part played by the third party, John Bard, the traditional "founder of the College."

"The founder of the family," George Genzmer tells us, "was Peter — originally Pierre — Bard, who as a youth left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and tried his fortune in London. A trading voyage having brought him to America, he settled happily in Burlington in West Jersey, married, became a judge of the provincial court, a member of the Governor's council, and a colonel of militia.

"Dr. John Bard (1716-1799), (who is sometimes confused with his great grandson and namesake, the founder of St. Stephen's College) was Peter's third son. After serving an apprenticeship to an English physician resident in Philadelphia, he practiced medicine for almost 60 years, chiefly in New York. Inadequate as his professional training may have been, judged by later standards, he was a notable physician and a pioneer in public health work. He was the first president of the Medical Society of the State of New York. His extensive estate on the Hudson in Dutchess County he named "Hyde Park" and the name soon became attached to the neighboring village.

"Dr. John's son, Dr. Samuel Bard (1742-1821) . . . is the most distinguished member of his family and the best known. For his professional training he went to the University of Edinburgh, which was then the most famous medical school in Europe, and on his return to New York he entered into partnership with his father. He married his cousin Mary, daughter of General Peter Bard. In 1767 with five other physicians who like himself had been educated abroad, he founded the College of Physicians and Surgeons, now the Medical School of Columbia University, which he served for 40 years as professor, dean, trustee and president. (Very appropriately Bard Hall at the medical school bears his name today.)

"In 1789 he performed a major operation in New York on George Washington, without which the General probably would not have survived his first term as President of the United States.

"Dr. Samuel Bard was also a notable horticulturist and sheep-breeder. Hyde Park during his life was more than a show place . . . it was an agricultural experiment station of genuine importance,"¹² — constituting what was often said to be the first arboretum in America."

The Bards — father and son — along with Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, were the leading American physicians of the late colonial and early Federal years. Rush and the elder Bard were friends and associates of Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia and members of the very exclusive dinner group which met weekly at Franklin's house. This trio of doctors were in every respect leading men of their age, and they left their monuments in the major institutions which they founded, or had a part in founding. Rush was a principal founder of Dickinson College and the hospital associated with the University of Pennsylvania. The elder Bard played a part in the launching of Columbia University (then called King's College), and his son was chief figure

in its medical school almost from its beginning, and was a founder or co-founder of the New York Hospital, the City's first free public library, the New York Medical Society, and the General Theological Seminary.

Samual Bard's son William Bard (the father of John Bard, the College's founder)

" . . . to these ancestral claims upon confidence and affection . . . added his own claims resulting from a more thorough classical education and a wider experience in the business of life . . . He graduated with honor from Columbia in the year 1797, and it may be added, was more than once thought of for its Presidency.

"Upon quitting college, the law became his profession — rather it may be believed from prudential motives than natural preference. A few years decided his choice — retirement to the country . . . From this scene of quiet happiness, the growing claims of a rising family transferred him about the year 1827 to the city of New York, where he at once took his place in the confidence and respect of the community among its prominent business men, assuming as he did the presidency of its earliest-formed 'Life and Trust Company,' a financial institution which his sagacity devised, and his zeal and devotion mainly carried out, and over which for many years he presided with a dignity and courtesy which added not a little to the popularity and influence of a hitherto untried financial scheme."¹³

William Bard was "a devout member of the Episcopal Church, well-read in his theology, and set an example to the men of Wall Street by always attending the 9 a.m. service at old Trinity before going to his business for the day."¹⁴ Mr. Bard had 14 children, of whom John Bard (born 1819) was the eleventh. In 1849 John married Margaret Taylor Johnston. John Bard, according to the much-consulted 19th century volume *The Wealth and the Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York* by Moses Y. Beach, had a net worth of \$400,000. "He received a considerable portion of his father's property, but the principal part of his wealth has been acquired by marriage." Mrs. Bard's father, John Johnston "of the later firm of Boorman, Johnston and Co., an English firm in the iron business," was listed in the Beach volume as having an estate of \$500,000. (Mid-19th century dollar figures must be multiplied by 8 to 10 times in order to arrive at equivalent values for today.)¹⁵

John Bard came from a family of high-achieving forebears, including noted physicians, the founders of a medical school and an insurance company, and an outstanding personality in the life of Columbia College. John Bard almost certainly did not have the hard-driving power of these men. He does not seem to have been shrewd or particularly astute in money matters. But he and his wife were devoutly and sincerely religious, and deeply sensible of the responsibility of the 19th century country gentleman to improve the lot of the people on his estate and in the neighboring villages. He enjoyed association with people of learning and with prominent ecclesiastics. It may be that

in their zeal for their cause, Bishop Potter and Dr. McVicker exploited a bit unfairly John Bard's love of churchly occasions and churchly associations. For the best of reasons and the best of causes, they may have gotten him in over his head financially.

Be that as it may, four years after his marriage, in 1852, John Bard bought the 130 acre Donaldson estate in Barrytown, known as Blithewood, reputedly paying \$60,000 for it. He renamed the estate Annandale, after the home of his wife's ancestors in Scotland¹⁶ and he and his wife promptly embarked upon a program of religious philanthropy. A chapel for the neighborhood was erected — the present Bard Hall — and a parish school in two departments established therein, "in which he enlisted the interest and support of John Cruger, Edwin Bartlett and John Aspinwall, gentlemen of the neighborhood."

Next, in the village now known as Tivoli, "Mr. Bard erected a building at the cost of \$7,000 — chapel above and school rooms below, and securing the services of the Rev. James Starr Clark, opened a parish school."

Mr. Bard authorized Mr. Clark to try to employ the Rev. George Seymour (later — 1878-1906 — Bishop of Springfield, Illinois), a teacher at General Seminary, to help with the work in Tivoli and Annandale. Seymour wrote back:

"... I have concluded to accept the offer which you are commissioned to make to me... You must not expect me until after New Years. When I come I shall claim the privilege of bringing with me a companion of no small note in the world, one whom I shall be happy to introduce you to and whose company I am confident you will richly enjoy. My only misgiving is as to whether you can accommodate him with room. His tastes are decidedly literary so that he will not interfere with our studies. His name? Do you ask. St. Augustine in eleven volumes. If you have any objection to his coming, let me know. I gave \$23.69 for him..."¹⁷

Mr. Seymour came and proved to be a very competent educator. Soon he was not only teaching neighborhood children, but also had gathered a nucleus of half a dozen or so young men who began studying under his guidance to prepare themselves for admission to General Seminary. And at John McVicker's quiet instigation, the Society appropriated \$1,000 for their support.

Impressed by Mr. Bard's philanthropies in Annandale and Tivoli, Bishop Potter "urged him to undertake the establishment of the Training School, so often called for by Mr. McVicker and himself. Mr. Bard told the Bishop that he had not a fortune equal to the support of such an institution; and only on the strong pledges of support of the diocese of New York, did he venture to undertake the task. Mr. Bard often expressed regret that the Bishop was unable to fulfill these pledges."¹⁸

But in the summer of 1856, John Bard's heart was overflowing with gratitude, and the future looked bright. For on the 29th of February, 1856, was born the Bard's fourth child and only son, Willie.

Before Annandale was definitely selected as the site of the new college, Bishop Potter was invited by Mr. Bard to bring his family from New York and occupy Mr. Bard's house while he and his family were away. The invitation was accepted. During that summer the Bishop had an opportunity to study the situation and to observe how well the location was adapted for the training school which he had in mind.

"Tomorrow my vacation ends," Bishop Potter wrote on August 1, 1856 to Mr. Bard

"and I depart from his charming retreat to resume my labors in the Diocese. It is just possible that I may be able to return for Mrs. P. a few days hence, and to pay my acknowledgements to you for what we have so much enjoyed. But the probability is that I may not be able to do so, and therefore I take this mode of saying that we have had more rest and refreshment in this place than I have had altogether anywhere since I entered upon my present office. Almost every hour of it has been associated in my mind with a sense of your friendship. I have written basketsfull of letters — and some more serious things; — still it has been a great rest, — and a great refreshment.

"About the house and among the domestics, everything has been in the most perfect order from the first day of our coming until now..."

"The only exception to the most perfect harmony among the members of your family here (I am most sorry to speak of it) — has been among the chickens! I think they are decidedly inclined to fall out with each other.

"I can only hope that you all may have derived as much pleasure and benefit from the past month as we have, — and that all your blessings may be long spared to you and abundantly enlarged. When I used to look with so much interest and respect upon your Father, I little thought that I should be so much indebted to his son, or so much attached to him and his. I remain, my dear Mr. and Mrs. Bard,

Most affectionately yours,
H. Potter"¹⁹

In June of the next year, 1857, they laid the cornerstone of the new Church of the Holy Innocents. It was to serve as the parish church of the neighborhood, and for the already functioning parish school, and as the Chapel for the projected "Training School" or College. In the cornerstone was "a paper containing these words:

To be erected in faith
and consecrated to the service of the Almighty God
by loving parents, as a thank-offering for the life of
Willie Bard"²⁰

(Whether the building's commemoration of his own child was the reason for Bard's choice of the name, Church of the Holy Innocents, is not known.)

The new church was just completed and ready for use, when on St. John's Day, December 27, 1858, it caught fire and was destroyed. Speaking at the

College 25 years later, John Bard recalled "when on that gloomy night it sank amid the devouring flames, and he felt almost ready to despair, it was his beloved wife, with her hand on the cradle of their only son, who roused him to new exertions, saying: 'Lose not courage, trust in God!'"²¹

Letters of sympathy poured in from John Bard's friends, relatives and associates in the church. In this cruel blow to his hopes it almost seemed as though Bard became more approachable than he had been. His grief, in which so many others now shared, created a new common bond which had not been there before. The letters ran the gamut from the pragmatic to the devotional. From John Henry Hopkins, Jr., on the day following the fire:

"My dear Friend:

I cannot write what I feel in regard to your great misfortune. I will be up on Saturday afternoon on the 4:30 p.m. train and spend Sunday with you, and we will go and look at the ruins together. I am firmly of the opinion that it is the work of malice; and also that if your faith fail not, the result will be the rallying round you of all those who have heretofore been cold or hostile, and the kindling of a general interest in your work in the minds and hearts of the Church at large, such as would not otherwise have been realized to so great a degree in many years..."²²

John Bard's cousin, the Rev. Samuel Roosevelt Johnson, enclosed in a letter of sympathy the prayer which he and his family had been offering at the family Altar since they heard the news:

"O Lord, our Heavenly Father, who alone rulest over all, Blessed be thy Holy Name under all the changing events of life. Glory be to Thee O Lord Most High. Just and true are thy ways, Thou King of Saints. We bow in adoring acquiescence before Thee, all whose thoughts are wisdom and all whose ways are love, — even though Thou makest flames of fire thy messengers. Strengthen Thou the trusting hearts of our friends whose beautiful house of prayer has been consumed. May it be as an offering pure and acceptable which shall but cause great blessings to descend on him and his own, and on the Holy cause in which they are engaged. Ever so, Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord. Amen."²³

"We have been once more at Annandale" the *Church Journal* reported,

"and have walked all around the ruins of the beautiful Church burned on St. John's day last week. The outer wall and the tower are almost uninjured, having been built originally with remarkable solidity. The exquisite tracery of the windows, in Caen stone is, however, utterly ruined; in some places only split and smirched with the smoke, but in others — especially the great altar window — clean gone, while even the gray stone of the outer arch is scaled and disintegrated by the heat. The Caen stone pillars of the interior crumbled down, carrying the whole clerestory with them, and it all lies now in heaps of dusky confusion in the basement. On looking up, from the inside of the ruin, the blue sky is seen spreading overhead, broken only by the blackened gables, standing up in solitary loneliness..."²⁴

"The fallen rubbish was still smoking when the work of clearing it away had already begun. And it is pleasing to learn that this sudden and most trying calamity has touched the hearts of others in the right way. A thousand dollars has been already given by two friends in the city of New York towards the rebuilding; and the people

of the neighborhood show a readiness to contribute of their slender means, thus proving their deep interest in the final completion of that which has thus far been generously done for them."²⁵

Mr. Bard determined to rebuild, he of course bearing almost all the expense. It was decided "to devote the contributions which have been received towards rebuilding, to the purchase of an organ; while the offerings of the children of the Sunday-School will most appropriately supply a font."²⁶

The work started in May. The architect of the original structure had been Frank Wills "but he did not live to furnish the working drawings which together with the plans for the reredos and chancel furniture, and some other details were supplied by Mr. Joseph Sands" of New York City. The rebuilding was under the direction of Mr. Samuel Babcock, "late of the firm of Upjohn and Co."²⁷ At this point, the Church was supplanting architecture in Mr. Babcock's interest, and he made the shift from architecture to the ministry, and following preparation under the Rev. Mr. Seymour, was ordained in the Chapel he had helped design, at the first ordination service in the building, in February, 1860.²⁸

And in that same month, one of the Church magazines ran a very detailed and informative full-page description of "the beautiful Church of the Holy Innocents, Annandale." Apart from the very precise and valuable detail of the article, there is the interesting problem of the Chapel's spire. "The height . . . to the top of the Tower (when complete)" the article points out, "will be 50 feet, over which a broach spire of stone and a finial and cross, will make the total height 118 ft."²⁹

John Bard showed no tendency whatsoever to cut costs either in the original construction of the Chapel, or in its rebuilding. But whether the Chapel, even before the 1858 fire, ever had this 118 foot spire is dubious. There was and is no such spire dating from the 1859 building. Early pictures and sketches of the Chapel do show the spire, but although they purport to be drawings of the actual building, they are more probably copies of the architect's rendering.

With the Church completed, and a nucleus of students present on the premises and receiving instruction from Mr. Seymour, and grants of \$2,000 per year authorized by the Society for Promoting Religion and Learning for support of the project, only the necessary implementing legal and canonical action remained in order to bring the College into existence and set it on its course. These steps were now promptly taken.

John Bard put his offer in writing:

"I hereby offer to give, for the use of St. Stephen's Hall (as proposed in the accom-

panying prospectus to be established) a piece of ground on the northeast corner of my estate of Annandale, 800 feet in length from East to West, by 375 feet in width from North to South, containing about 7 acres, together with the buildings thereon, viz: — the Church of the Holy Innocents (to be fully restored and made ready for occupancy), to be used as a chapel for the College; 2nd, the parish schoolhouse of the Church of the Holy Innocents; 3rd, the building now occupied as a parsonage. . .

"I further offer to give during my life and the continuance of my ability, the sum of one thousand dollars per annum toward the support of the College.

"The value of the above property, when the Church is restored, will be \$40,000.

Annandale, May 1st, 1859, — John Bard"³⁰

The Society for Promoting Religion and Learning took this action:

"*Resolved*, that the above plan of a Training School under the title of St. Stephen's Hall, Annandale, Dutchess County, be approved and receive the sanction of this Society . . . and that . . . the above plan . . . be laid before the approaching Convention of the Diocese of New York by special report from this Society, as the Diocese's canonical agent for ministerial education, accompanied with the earnest recommendation that it be adopted. . ."³¹

And the Convention took the final authorizing step:

"The munificent donation of property at Annandale, valued at sixty thousand dollars . . . is a gift to the Church in this Diocese demanding the grateful acknowledgment of this Convention, therefore

"*Resolved* that this Convention hereby tender the thanks of the Church to John Bard of Annandale for his generous establishment and endowment of a Training School, for the benefit of the Diocese.

"*Resolved*, that this Convention recognize the Training School at Annandale as a Diocesan Institution, worthy of the confidence and patronage of Churchmen. . ."³²

Mr. Bard later gave the tract on the hilltop — the center of the present main campus — bringing his total gift of land for the College to 18 acres.

Application was made by the Hon. John V. L. Pruyn to the Legislature for an act of incorporation. A charter was obtained March 20, 1860, declaring that

"John Bard and Margaret his wife, and their associates hereinafter named, are hereby constituted and declared to be a body corporate, by the name of 'The Trustees of St. Stephen's College,' for the general object and purpose of establishing, conducting and maintaining a seminary of learning in Red Hook, Dutchess County, — which shall be a Training College for the education and Christian training of young men who design to enter the sacred ministry in the Protestant Episcopal Church. . ."³³

The Trustees were authorized "to confer the usual degrees in divinity" with the proviso that whenever the permanent endowment of this institution "inclusive of the buildings and property heretofore referred to, . . . shall amount to at least one hundred thousand dollars, the said trustees shall have like power with any other college in this state to confer academical and literary degrees. . ."³³

The first trustees under the Charter were the Rt. Rev. Horatio Potter, the Hon. John V. L. Pruyn, Rev. John McVickar, Samuel Buell, the Rev. George F.

Seymour, Hon. Murray Hoffman, Walter Langdon Esq., James F. DePeyster Esq., John L. Aspinwall Esq., John Bard Esq., Mrs. Margaret J. Bard, William A. Davies Esq., Homer Ramsdell Esq., and Henry W. Sargent Esq.

(The Legislature on May 21, 1861, authorized an increase in the number of Trustees from 16 to 24, and the following additional Trustees were elected: the Hon. John A. King, the Hon. Hamilton Fish, the Rev. John Cotton Smith, the Rev. William Rudder, John Jacob Astor, Cyrus Curtiss, John Knickerbocker, and Cornelius L. Tracy.)

The naming of Margaret Bard in the opening sentence of the Charter, and her designation as one of the charter trustees were very unusual actions for the year 1860. For a time she was thought to be the only female trustee of a college or university in the United States. But then it was found that Mrs. Nathan Warren of Troy was a trustee of the Warren Free Institute.³⁴

The Trustees met and organized April 11, 1860, electing Mr. Pruyn chairman of the Board, and the Rev. George F. Seymour Warden of the College. St. Stephen's College was formally started on its way. It opened in its new status the following September with six students and a teaching staff consisting of Mr. Seymour and the former architect who had supervised the reconstruction of the Chapel after the fire and had then been the first person to be ordained there — the Rev. Charles Babcock — as instructor in mathematics and tutor in Latin, Greek and English. (Each of the two teachers was on a salary of \$1,000 per year, a generous sum for those days.) Mr. Seymour resigned at the end of his first year and was replaced in mid-1861 by the Rev. Thomas Richey at a salary of \$1,500; a promised contribution of \$500 per annum by John L. Aspinwall had made this increase possible. In this second year there were 12 students.

The College had four buildings; the Chapel and adjacent schoolhouse (later known as Bard Hall): the house originally designed as a parsonage for the Chapel (and lately lived in by Professor Artinian and more recently by Mr. Patrick); and a stuccoed cottage on a rock north of the Chapel, originally intended to house the janitor, which served as a student dormitory until Aspinwall's completion. This edifice, since demolished, was only 20 x 25 ft. and a story-and-a-half high. In the College's first year it housed up to 12 students. They took their meals at the Rectory with the Babcocks.

To relieve the crowded conditions in the janitor's cottage, the trustees promptly announced a campaign for \$30,000 for a new College building. Construction started in 1861, and the building was finished and occupied the next year. (Actually the building cost only \$17,000, with the contributions coming from John Bard, John L. Aspinwall, W. H. Aspinwall, R. B. Minturn,

John V. L. Pruyn, W. B. Astor, W. Chamberlin, Henry W. Sargent, W. A. Davies, John Campbell, Homer Ramsdale, Cyrus Curtiss, T. R. Wetmore, A. B. Sands, B. H. Field Jr., J. A. Seymour, J. W. Coddington, John Caswell, Adam Norrie, George T. Strong, Thomas McMullen, James F. DePeyster, C. E. Bill, C. R. Tracy, Jonas C. Heartt, Jos. M. Warren, E. A. Robinson, J. M. Dunbar, J. J. Ciscom, Mrs. Wm. Bard, Mrs. Walter Langdon, Mrs. G. P. Phenix, Mrs. Knill, Bishop Potter, Rev. Samuel H. Turner, The Rev. Dr. John I. Tucker and the Rev. Dr. Henry DeKoven.

As an interesting sidelight, George B. Hopson reports that when the building was finished Mr. Pruyn "furnished the parlor and bedroom at the head of the stairs, with the intention of occupying them on the occasion of his frequent visits to the College. As he was president of the Board of Trustees, they were known as the president's rooms. Before his second marriage, he often spent Saturday and Sunday at Annandale. . . ."³⁵

The new building was the first in what was to be in the College's central campus. Designed by the former architect/now tutor, Samuel Babcock, and subsequently named Aspinwall, it provided accommodation for 30 students, as well as kitchen, laundry, dining room, library, recitation rooms, and "rooms for the professors and servants." Somewhat altered over the years, it is still one of the most heavily used facilities on the campus.³⁶

The College held its first Commencement in 1861. Sadly though, two years later its first graduate was dead — Charles Coles, who had ranked at the top of his St. Stephen's class of three, and continued on to the General Seminary where he was a high-ranking member of the Senior Class when he died on August 2, 1863, in Annandale.³⁷

Professor Babcock resigned in 1862, and was replaced by the Rev. Robert B. Fairbairn. The faculty (the warden and the one professor) began regular faculty meetings in the fall of 1862, and Fairbairn was elected secretary of the faculty. Two months later Library rules were adopted by the faculty and Professor Fairbairn was designated Librarian. After serving two years as Warden, Mr. Richey resigned and Mr. Fairbairn, after only a year on the campus, was elected to replace him. Fairbairn's administrative competence had already been recognized in his speedy designation as Secretary of the faculty and Librarian.

In those first years (and continuing until his removal to Europe in 1868) the College was very much an extension of Mr. Bard's own personal churchly interests and there was no clear line of demarcation between the life of the College and that of Mr. Bard's estate and the involvement of his personal

and churchly associates. An example is the elaborate and carefully planned festival celebration of All Saints' Day over the years until Mr. Bard's departure for England in 1868. By his deed of gift of the College Chapel, Mr. Bard had reserved the right to occupy the Church on the festival of All Saints in every year for the purpose of Divine services appropriate to the Day. For this occasion Mr. Bard invited a distinguished churchman to be the preacher, secured the services of an outstanding choir from one of the city churches, and sent individually written invitations to his friends, inviting them to attend.

"... the Eve of the feast the keys of the Church were brought over to Mr. Bard's house in procession by the Faculty and students in a body, the Warden at their head who made a neat little speech on delivering the keys; to which Mr. Bard briefly and cordially responded. At 7½ on the following morning there was an early communion . . . By twelve o'clock the invited guests began to arrive. . . this year the . . . renowned Choir of the Holy Cross, Troy, were invited. A special car was chartered and the whole party arrived at the College buildings at 12½, where they were met by the clergy of the vicinity, the students, and the Rev. Thos. Richie, Warden. . . and the procession started from the College in reverse order. A more picturesque effect of the kind we have never seen than that line of girls and maidens, in scarlet cardinals, followed by the students in square caps and academic gowns, and these in turn by the clergy in surplices and stoles, moving in winding line through the open woods between the College and the Church, the chequered sunlight and forest shadows giving fresh effect at every step and the many hues of the foliage around adding to the richness and brilliant harmony of the whole. . . The church was crowded to suffocation with persons attracted by the splendor of the arrangements and the fame of the previous services. . . The Rev. Dr. Tucker. . . preached an eloquent sermon appropriate to All Saints' Day. . . and the services were ended by the rendering of the glorious Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Oratorio of the Messiah, by the combined strength of the Holy Cross Choir. It was pronounced by competent judges to be one of the most effective and splendid choral services ever celebrated in this Diocese. . . After the conclusion of this interesting service, a handsome collation was given at Mr. Bard's residence to the whole congregation; and visits to the waterfall followed."³⁸

In these years from the birth of his son (1856) until his departure to England (1868), John Bard lived happily and fully the life of a mid-19th century country gentleman. He and his wife were deeply involved in their philanthropies — the College and the little neighborhood churches with their attached schools, which they had founded. They were respected for their religious devotion and their good works, and they enjoyed the affection of the neighborhood. Nearly a century later Mrs. John Hamlin, the daughter of John Pruyn, the College's first Board chairman, recalled the John Bard she had known as a very little girl.³⁹ He had a fringe-top surrey in which he would transport guests to and from Barrytown station. He loved children and the College's mementos still include the newspaper clipping of a party he gave annually for neighborhood children, with games, delicious refresh-

ments, favors, — and then a speech especially for the children by Mr. Bard. Still remembered (and preserved in a few faded photos) is the “picture window” in the Blithewood living room, a window with a choice view of the river and a frame — literally — around it, to make it appear a painting.

One day Mr. Pruyn, Mrs. Hamlin’s father, “took her with him when he went to Blithewood to talk with John Bard. She had a nurse or governess along. When the two men settled down to talk, the nurse took the girl down back of what is now the Italian garden, down the hill a bit and up the river a bit, where there was a fountain in a little shelter, with a wooden roof over it, and a seat, with a fine view of the river. The nurse went back to hob-nob with the Bards’ servants, and the girl dreamed happily as she related it — ‘dreaming a small girl’s dreams’ — ‘dreamed away an hour or so over that lovely view of the river, the boats and the mountains.’”

Nearly a century later, “Buzz” Gummere made his way to the site, and there “sure enough the remains of the roof, with vestiges of ‘Romanesque’ ornamentation and the metal bowl of the fountain, were still evident among the brush.”

Mrs. Hamlin also remembered meeting Mr. Bard in the Albany railroad station with her father. She had heard her parents talk about Mr. Bard’s having lost a lot of money, and she childishly made some remark about it, right there in the station. He held out his hand to her, with all the change in his pocket. “This is all the money I have in the world,” he said gaily, “take a coin.”