



Notes from the  
DeKoven Center's  
Archives

Issue 1 - September 2017

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### Inaugural Issue of the "Notes"

As we continue our work with the archives located in the DeKoven Center, we find interesting stories and documents that we want to share with a larger audience. For this reason we have decided to publish a twice-yearly newsletter that includes items we have found particularly noteworthy. We hope our readers agree and we welcome any feedback you might like to share.

### Taylor Hall -- 1867-2017 Its Sesquicentennial Anniversary

June 22, 2017 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of Taylor Hall.

It was the fourth building erected on the Racine College campus. The first two, Park Hall and Kemper Hall, the anchors of the East Building, were begun in 1852 and 1857 respectively. James DeKoven came to Racine College in 1859 and in 1864 laid the cornerstone for St. John's Chapel which was dedicated in 1865.

In his personal journal, Father DeKoven describes the motivation and history of funding for the next building:

*Isaac Taylor, one of our Trustees, is dead. He came to this country a poor lad and was a bootblack, then an ostler, and at last amassed a huge fortune . . . I have often talked to him about building a Hall for the sons of the Clergy in connection with the College.*

Although Isaac Taylor did not provide funds for the building when he died, his widow, Emerline Taylor, did include such a gift in her will upon her death just one year later in 1866. She left \$35,000 for the building and \$30,000 for an endowment to maintain it.

Father DeKoven provides this description of the day in June 1867:

*The cornerstone of Taylor Hall was laid on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with great solemnities. . . . It was a lovely day. The grounds have never looked so charming as they do this spring. We have built a new barn and the old sheds are gone—brick walks have been laid, the garden is in capital order, the flower garden looks pretty and it is all beautiful.*

The building was finished by December of the same year and was formally opened in January 1868. It became the college building and provided living accommodations for several faculty members as well as 60 young scholars.

Tragedy struck on the night of February 3, 1875—a fire broke out in a chimney and the building was gutted. It was a bitterly cold night with a strong wind; the temperature registered -20 degrees. Several employees suffered frostbite, but only one student was injured when he walked on glass from a broken skylight.



Figure 1 Taylor Hall after the fire of 1875.

Taylor Hall was quickly rebuilt with insurance money and funds raised by the citizens of Racine. The new building, which had a central heating system thus eliminating the need for stoves in each room, was finished by September of the same year.

Taylor Hall continued to function as the collegiate building until 1888 when the college closed and the institution became a boys' school. During the period 1922-1932 the campus served as

a military academy under the direction of the Cushman family. They leased Taylor Hall from 1923 – 1929 to the National Center for Devotion and Conference of the Protestant Episcopal Church. This organization remodeled rooms and facilities for conference participants.

In 1935 the Racine College campus was sold to the Community of Saint Mary, an order of Episcopal nuns, who had used the buildings and grounds in 1933 and 1934 for a summer camp for girls. The sisters moved to Taylor Hall in 1938 and under the leadership of Sister Eanswith began restoration of the historic structures.

Since 1986 the DeKoven Center has functioned under the auspices of Episcopal diocese of Milwaukee. Taylor Hall serves as the guest house for conferences and retreats as well as the administrative offices of the Center.

*John E. Magerus, Archivist*

### The Students' Records – Racine College

One of the treasures found in the archives is a large, aged, leather-bound book entitled *The Students' Records*. The first section is the "Matriculation Book of Racine College," where students signed their names between 1861 and 1866.

The remainder of the book list students from five major eras of the college: students under Dr. Park, first president and founder of the Racine College; students under Dr. DeKoven (1859-1879); Racine College in the post DeKoven era; students in the Army Training Corps; and students from 1923-25 when the institution was a two tier college. Rather than students signing their names, as found in the first section, in the remaining sections the names were entered by a registrar and given a number. In total there are 3,197+ handwritten entries of students who attended the institution from the beginning of the college in 1852 until its end in 1925.

Depending upon the era, more or less information is provided about a particular

individual. Columns of information are: student name, date of entrance, age, parent or guardian, home residence, birthday, when the student left, and remarks.

"What years did my great, great grandfather attend Racine College?" is a question frequently asked of the archivist. Knowing the person's name and approximate age can still mean going through several, sometimes hard-to-read pages, before finding a specific individual. This is a very labor-intensive process.

Student Name	Date of Birth
3152 Owen John W.	Aug. 8, 1899
3153 Piper Albert	
3154 Piper Harold	
3155 Pitt Chester Franklin	May 15, 1908
3156 Rodgers John Wesley Mann	April 25, 1907
3157 Shaw Lee Charles	Feb. 17, 1913
3158 Simonson William Arthur	March 17, 1911
3159 Singer Edward Albert Jr.	Aug. 1, 1910
3160 Smidding William	June 18, 1908
3161 Travers Charles Frederick	Jan. 29, 1908
3162 Brill Abraham	Dec. 9, 1911
3163 Giles Albert Myles	
3164 Shelute Julius	Feb. 18, 1908
3165 Goodman Jerome Armin	Feb. 7, 1910
3166 Mann David	
3167 Parsons John Butles	Oct. 23, 1906
3168 Fredericks Charles Gilbert	Aug. 10, 1907
3169 Underwood Harold Barnes	Aug. 25, 1913
3170 Dodge Sherwood	
3171 Metcalf Wayne	
3172 Mathews Kenneth George	June 1, 1906
<del>3173</del> <del>Hilbert Peter</del>	
3173 Miles Robert Hugh	
3174 Larson Robert Alfred	May 16, 1907
3175 Andis Mathew	
3176 Arenty Alfred	
3177 Barnes Walter Roswell	
3178 Brudick Harold	
3179 Clarke Gilson Ellis	
3180 Cunningham John Jr.	
3181 Davis David Bryce Jr.	Oct. 21, 1910
3182 French Frank C. Jr.	11, 1910

Figure 2 Page from the "Students Record."

The good news for archivists and those desiring to look up an individual who attended Racine College, is that we are now in the process of digitizing the contents of the book. When this project is completed, entering a name will provide all of the information about an individual.

Entering the information of 3,197+ individuals is slow work, but we are making good headway.

Fr. James Braun, Archives Volunteer

## James DeKoven . . . Namesakes

The students who studied at Racine College were amazingly dedicated to their “warden,” James DeKoven. He, in turn, showed them a caring love that influenced them throughout their lives. One testimonial of this lasting impact was shared by the Rev. Sidney T. Smythe, who became rector of St. John Chrysostom church in Delafield and founded St. John’s Military Academy. He said, “*Outside of my family, no one has ever had a greater influence on my life and thinking than had Dr. DeKoven. I loved him as I loved my father.*”<sup>1</sup>

One indication of this devotion can be seen in the number of boys who were named in honor of James DeKoven either by their fathers who were former students at Racine or Nashotah, or churchmen who respected James DeKoven as an inspired leader of the Protestant Episcopal Church. We have found this information about these boys named in honor of Father DeKoven in variety of sources.

The earliest reference comes from James DeKoven himself who in a journal entry for 1874 mentions the visit of a former student:

*I have had a visit too this summer from Stephen Frisbie and his wife and two children, one named after me. He is a faithful clergyman doing his duty well in a humble parish in Michigan.*

Rev. Stephen Frisbie, who was born in Summit, Wisconsin, and his wife Alphine, named their son, who was born on 12 August 1870, **James DeKoven Frisbie**. Stephen Frisbie served as the Rector of St. James Church in Detroit for 30 years and the Secretary of the Convention of the Diocese of Michigan for 40. He died in Detroit in 1924. James DeKoven Frisbie married and lived in Chicago where he was an office manager; he and his wife had two children, a son and a daughter. He died in Chicago in 1921.

Father DeKoven seemed more interested in the ministerial success of his former student than in the child named in his honor. However, in the next year, 1875, another child was named for him. DeKoven served as the Godfather for the son of the Rev. Charles Wesley Leffingwell, **Ernest DeKoven Leffingwell**, born 13 January 1875. Rev. Leffingwell had studied at Nashotah House Theological Seminary and like James DeKoven was dedicated to the education of Christian youth. His sons, Ernest and Charles attended the grammar school at Racine College in 1888-1891. Ernest went on to study at Trinity College in Connecticut. He achieved fame as an arctic explorer, geologist and educator.

In a letter written to Sister Mary Bianca of the DeKoven Foundation in 1964 Ernest mentions that he was honored to have James DeKoven as his Godfather: “Yes, I am the god-son of Dr. DeKoven, a friend of my father’s and I cherish the silver cup given to me by him at the time of my baptism. Ernest died in 1971 at the age of 96. In October 2016 the Archives received a request from Mrs. Barbara Metheral seeking information about her great-grandfather Samuel Lloyd Edkin. She thought he attended Racine College and our records indicated that he had been a student from 1867-1873. In her email she indicated that her great-grandfather “. . . had 2 boys, and to his eldest he gave the second or middle name ‘DeKoven’ which I’ve never come across before.” This son was

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Harris H. Holt in *The Story of the Church of St. John Chrysostom, Delafield, Wisconsin, 1851-1956*, p. 13. Published

**Lester DeKoven Floyd** (6 June 1880 – 19 March 1960).

I was able to help Mrs. Metheral discover some additional information about her great-grandfather. She wondered why he had come to Wisconsin to study at Racine College. An orphan, he had been sent to live with his grandparents in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Our records indicate that the rector of the Episcopal Church in Williamsport at the time was John Henry Hopkins, Jr., a good friend of James DeKoven. Hopkins obviously provided Edkin's grandparents with information about the school.



Figure 3 Lester DeKoven Floyd and his brother, William.

Samuel Lloyd Edkin changed his last name to Floyd when he moved to Canada as a young adult. He was successfully employed in the newspaper business. This is where he married and where his two sons were born and explains the different last name for his son. Obviously he had good memories of Racine College and its rector even as he lived a new life in Canada.

One of the students who is mentioned most frequently in James DeKoven's journal is William Cox Pope. Pope's family was very involved in the establishment of the church of St. John Chrysostom in Delafield and helped Father DeKoven as he worked at creating the school called St. John's Hall. "Willie" Pope, as DeKoven refers to him, was a dedicated believer in the educational methods that DeKoven established in Delafield and later at Racine College. Pope, who was the first graduate of Racine College under DeKoven's leadership, continued his studies at Nashotah House and was ordained a priest. For many years he worked in the Twin Cities where he founded the Church of the Good Shepherd in Saint Paul.

William Cox Pope was also known as a writer. He published several works that dealt with the Protestant Episcopal Church, including *The Church in Saint Paul* and *The Genesis of the American Church*. In 1899 he published the only book-length biography of James DeKoven, *The Life of the Reverend James DeKoven, Sometime Warden of Racine College*. It is not surprising then, that he named his second son **James DeKoven Pope** (24 July 1894 – 28 June 1901). He dedicated his biography of DeKoven to his young son who unfortunately died only two years later.

Another DeKoven namesake born in 1894 (June 28 ) was **Edward DeKoven Williams** son of the Rev. John Williams an Episcopal priest in Nebraska. The Rev. Williams was born and studied in Ireland before immigrating to the United States in 1882. He married in this country and had 8 children with his wife Frances. We can only assume that James DeKoven's ideas and religious beliefs were valued by John Williams and thus can explain the choice of name for his third son.

Edward DeKoven Williams was enrolled as a student at Racine College in 1907-08. He served in World War I and returned to France in 1919 to marry his French-born wife, Lila. He became an accountant and worked in New York. He and Lila had no children. Edward died in Hampstead, New York in January 1977.

These brief biographies reflect the impact that James DeKoven had on those who knew him as teacher, scholar and friend. There are probably

others who named children in his honor; we can only hope to discover their stories as we continue our work.

*John E. Magerus, Archivist*

## The Chapel of Saint Mary's on the Lake, Kenosha, Wisconsin

The Community of Saint Mary assumed responsibility for Kemper Hall school for girls in 1878. By the end of the 1890's they had expanded their mission to include a summer camp for children from the Saint Mary's Home in Chicago. They built this summer campus on the shores of Lake Michigan near Kemper Hall. What follows are excerpts from a first-person narrative of the somewhat 'sticky' dedication of the camp chapel, called Saint Mary of the Lake. By the early 1920's lakeshore erosion caused the closing of the camp and the buildings were either moved or demolished.



*Figure 4 Saint Mary's Summer Camp in Kenosha.*

*It was a beautiful mid-summer day [1906]. A bit too warm for comfort, but beautiful. There was a breeze from Lake Michigan which blew over the adjoining field and caused the red clover to ripple in waves of changing rose and green. It looked cool and we, in the over-warm chapel which was pervaded with the smell of fresh varnish, rather envied the bees that were reveling in the fragrance of the clover outside. . . . The chapel was full. There was much waving of fans in the congregation. Finally the choir of children, dressed*

*in the white caps and aprons that comprised the Home uniform, started from the outside cloister up the middle aisle singing a hymn . . . There were a number of visiting clergy . . . The Bishop preached. I do not remember any of the sermon. I do remember that the Bishop had trouble in finding a handkerchief with which to mop his heated brow. After the sermon when the hymn was announced there was a sound of cracking and tearing as the congregation arose. We had stuck to the seats: the seats were never the same again, and I am sure the clothes never were. One lady in a print dress left a pattern on the back of her bench that nothing was able to remove. We were very recollected, however, and the Mass was finished without further mishap.*

## Publication Information

Our plan is to publish two issues of this newsletter each year, one in September and one in March. We will publish both an electronic and a hard-copy versions of the "notes." We appreciate any feedback that you care to provide: additions, corrections, suggestions. These can be sent to the e-mail address listed below or to the DeKoven Center, attention: Archives.

We hope you enjoy the stories and information in this first issue.

Sincerely,

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Fr. Jim Braun

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