

CHAPTER ONE

CONGREGATIONALIST SCHOOLS – COLORADO COLLEGE¹

Editor’s Note: This is one of the oldest known accounts of the founding of Colorado College. It is the major source for the information that the initial motivation for the founding was to create a memorial to the 14-year-old daughter of Thomas Nelson Haskell, the founder of Colorado College. She died of tuberculosis in 1873. This writing also makes clear that, from the moment of its earliest conception, Colorado College was intended to be “open to both sexes and all races.”

The first organized college in Colorado is the memorial of a beautiful American girl, who lost her life for the love of learning. She came as a young consumptive to our Territory in the spring of 1873, and died the next autumn at the age of 14. When visiting General Palmer’s residence one day, and looking at the eagles on the rocks and in the air, she suggested the “founding of a school near by, where youth inclined to pulmonary diseases might learn to soar, as light of heart and strong of wing as old Glen Eyrie’s king of birds,” whose life among the cliffs and flight above the clouds symbolized her own aspiring hope and faith, which sang at last,

“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.”

¹ Horace M. Hale, *Education in Colorado* (Denver, CO: News Printing Company, 1885), p. 96. Hale does not tell this story himself. It is included in an article on Colorado College inserted at the end of the book. The author of the article is identified on page 93 as “some friend of the school.” Robert D. Loevy suspected the article was either written by Thomas N. Haskell, the founder of Colorado College, or someone very close to him.



FLORENCE EDWARDS HASKELL

She is pictured at age twelve in the year 1871. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)

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Soon after “Florence Edward’s” death² her father, Professor T. N. Haskell, laid before the Congregational Conference, at Boulder, her idea of starting a college, open to both sexes and all races, and as their chosen Moderator he convened the Association again in Denver January 20, 1874, to consider the proposition of several towns in aid of such an enterprise. His address on that occasion was the first pamphlet published in Colorado upon “Collegiate Education” here, though many had spoken and thought of its importance before. The Conference gratefully accepted the offer from Colorado Springs of seventy acres of city land and \$10,000 cash, and appointed a Self Perpetuating Board of Trust, which should ever have a majority of Christian men to keep the college evangelical, non-sectarian, and in sympathy with the progress of the age.

The Trustees met at once, named the school Colorado College, and made Professor Haskell its General Agent, to solicit funds and help select a faculty. At this suggestion Rev. Jonathan Edwards, of Massachusetts, was engaged to open (May 6, 1874) a Preparatory Department, and so many advanced students came that at the end of the first term a committee of educated men passed thirteen of them to the literary and scientific freshman rank. Meanwhile the Agent raised money for a temporary building and endowment pledges of several thousand dollars.

The next year Rev. Mr. Dougherty, nominated by Dr. Sturtevant, of Denver, became the President, and under him, though many of the students were diverted to other colleges and secular pursuits, the work went on.

In 1876 Rev. E. P. Tenney was chosen to preside, aided by several professors from the East. May 31, 1878, he was duly inaugurated. The new stone building, with the library, apparatus and college grounds were formally dedicated.³ Over 200 annual students were enrolled, and two, Parker Sedgwick Halleck and Frederick Welles Tuckerman, were graduated as “Colorado’s first Bachelors of Arts.”

² The young girl’s name was Florence Edwards Haskell. “Florence Edwards” could have been what she was called by her family, given that those words were put in quotes.

³ The “new stone building” was called Palmer Hall for awhile but then was named Cutler Hall.



THE GRAVE OF FLORENCE EDWARDS HASKELL

Florence Edwards Haskell was buried in Fairmount Cemetery in Denver. Her grave is marked by this simple marble tablet. Buried next to her, in unmarked graves, are her father, mother, and sister. (Photograph by Robert D. Loevy.)



A FADING GRAVESTONE

Time, weather, and lawn sprinklers are progressively wearing away the lettering on Florence Edward Haskell's grave marker. (Photograph by Robert D. Loevy.)

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The patronage of the College grew, till, in 1884, for monetary mistakes, the Board unanimously voted the Presidency again vacant, which at this writing is still unfilled.⁴ The Faculty, Board and students, however, it is believed, were never doing better college work than now. Financial embarrassments have been removed, and ardent, able friends, both old and new, declare that Colorado College must not decline or die. Its founders deem it a memorial almost divine, and the land, deeded for its exclusive educational use, as inalienable and “holy ground.”

⁴ The college presidency remained unfilled for four years, during which time the professors ran the college. In 1888 William Frederick Slocum became the President of Colorado College.