

Lower Campus

In the interests of the ecclesiastic weal:
The academy. Spiritual syllables designed
The paradigms of air, suspending asterisks
Of wonder that God was real west of Chicago,
In a circlet of mountains, west from Denver,
Over the Divide, and the arch range shading
South into Mexico. The hewn and homespun
City that honored Etienne Provost gathered
Filaments of learning from prairie flowers,
Sage, and the grain of books so carefully
Aligned and kept on a few shelves to edify
When seen, available at the touch of a hand
To mollify inquiry under the godly discipline
Of Maeser, a German saint rounded and sized
To fit a charity and a dedication for query
And learning. Far from Nauvoo the Beautiful,
But amid the signs of light over folded hands,
Classes began, homespun as if from vibrancy
Of patterned cloth across a counter, for sale.
Abounding for room, the academy kept its edifice
Of spirit in the stone of a round of buildings.
Halls of morning and a bell to ring to begin
Its meek prestige south of the capital city,
In the circlet of snow and greendark pines,
Beside a desert lake and the tenor of expanse
Westward still. Urgent whispering, Eloi,
Eloi, meant sorrow or the gaiety of sheaves
Of pages worn from their bindings from sallies
Of will, very marvels of what they came to be



Education Building, Lower Campus (south side). In this view, one can see the year “1881” above the second level and the academy name over the main entrance. Courtesy of the Photoarchives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

In rituals of God's beneficence: grammar
And penmanship, if nothing more, and surely
Never less. But like a rustic hint becoming
A sceptre of light, the Academy became itself
Always, seldom with abrasions of intellect,
But careful within, names arising for its mood:
Osmond, Swensen, Nelson, Pardoe, Reynolds,
Madsen, Harris, *et al.*, who never said finality
For arts and sciences but only in behalf of God,
Who gave them a liberal purview of reality
Before the paradise of crystal earth, soon
To be. Classrooms inhabited until their wood
Split or warped, kept golden as students used it
Well, nicking identity here and there for fame;
Soft steps solemnly to and from, middle-worn
From trudging, the balanced weight of learning
Carried in primer manuscripts; desks in rows
For the forward motion of hands and periodic
Competence; soft lights and bells of glass
On cords for luminescence with switches there;
High ceilings that echoed rhetoric; and doors
That opened softly to the meekest gesture.
All who listened, listened well as the Academy
Moved to higher ground, ledge of its spirit,
Translated into natural size but meek as breath
That is held on a prospect's edge, then shimmers
Into Statement.

—Clinton F. Larson