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Lower Campus

Clinton F. Larson

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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