

Henry K. Ober

Henry Kulp Ober was born near Manheim, Pennsylvania in 1878 to a thrifty, Pennsylvania German family.<sup>1</sup> In his early years, he spent his time on a farm where he later united with the church in 1899 and was married to Cora Hess in the same year.<sup>2</sup> Ober had four children, two boys and two girls, and taught a rural school in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> Ober and his family resided on College at South Market street between Hanover and Spruce Streets.<sup>4</sup>

In 1903, he was hired as Vice President and taught Mathematics, Penmanship, Commercial Subjects, Pedagogy, Biology, Agriculture, and Surveying.<sup>5</sup> While holding the position of Vice President, Ober took control of an agricultural course since so many students came from farming families.<sup>6</sup> From 1904-1905, Ober was also the Principal of the Commercial Department.<sup>7</sup> In 1908, he was a student at Millersville State Normal School from which he received a degree in Bachelor of Pedagogy.<sup>8</sup> Continuing his education, he earned a Master of Science degree from Franklin and Marshall College and a Master of Arts of the College for two years.<sup>9</sup> In 1922 he took a leave of absence to further graduate study in which he earned an A.M. degree from Columbia University and was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania where he practically completed the residence requirements for the Ph.D. degree.<sup>10</sup> Later on, he would lay the foundations of a sound Pedagogy for students preparing for the teaching profession.<sup>11</sup> Up until 1911, Ober served as Treasurer and Business Manager and finally from 1918 to 1921 and also 1924 to 1928, he was the President of Elizabethtown College.<sup>12</sup>

While serving as the President of Elizabethtown College, President Ober authored the motto on the college seal that read, "God, Light, and Truth," as well as the college motto, "Make Jesus King," which is posted in the chapel in Rider Memorial Hall.<sup>13</sup> Also during his presidency, President Ober was a Republican Candidate for State Senate and pastored Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren from 1928 to 1939.<sup>14</sup> The following month he was called before the Elizabethtown Church's council meeting to request "forgiveness for allowing his name to be used in a recent election."<sup>15</sup> While pastoring at the church, he also helped to conduct many bible institutes in the churches of Eastern and Southern Pennsylvania.<sup>16</sup> Ober always would participate in the service of the Elizabethtown Church of God.<sup>17</sup> Aside from doing all of these things, he submitted a proposal on the management of the College multiple times, was part of the committee from the district, and was part of the Board committee.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph W. Schlosser, History of Elizabethtown College, 1899-1970 Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2014, 223.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Richard K. MacMaster, Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries Elizabethtown: The Elizabethtown Historical Society, 2000, 177.

<sup>5</sup> Benowitz, Jean-Paul, and Peter J. Depuydt, Elizabethtown College: The Campus History Series Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2014, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Chet Williamson, Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College Elizabethtown: Elizabethtown College Press, 2001, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Schlosser, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, Images of America Elizabethtown Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2015, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> MacMaster, 235.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>17</sup> MacMaster, 199.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 68.

Ober was heavily interested in developing an agricultural department on the campus and was entrusted with this project.<sup>19</sup> Due to him being in administration, he began a number of projects in the first years.<sup>20</sup> He was appointed as a committee to investigate the cost of a new building for the college.<sup>21</sup> Among his many other projects, he had duties as a Manager of the Auditorium-Gymnasium Campaign which he would later be relieved from.<sup>22</sup> Ober authorized to bring tentative plans for a Gible Science Building.<sup>23</sup> His involvement also resided in a committee of the faculty in the consideration of the feasibility of erecting a library.<sup>24</sup> He was also the business manager of the Our College Times Editorial Staff.<sup>25</sup> Aside from being heavily involved, he was asked consistently to give a memorial address in the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren that he delivered.<sup>26</sup>

After taking a leave of absence for education purposes, Henry Kulp Ober was asked to return to the Presidency. On January 26, 1924, the Board elected H.K. Ober a second time as President of Elizabethtown College, but he declined the office in a meeting of the Board on February 16, 1924.<sup>27</sup> At the next meeting of the Board on March 28, 1924, Ober accepted the Presidency providing a field man be procured for the College and several other standards were to be met.<sup>28</sup> In order to return to presidency, Ober had the following requirements: The College had to hire a “field man” to recruit students.<sup>29</sup> Accounts involved with and within the college should be audited by a CPA.<sup>30</sup> An annual budget of expenses should be made.<sup>31</sup> There should be a plan to relieve dissatisfied pledge signers.<sup>32</sup> He also formally requested, “An effort be made immediately to clean up the present indebtedness of \$3700.”<sup>33</sup> He also insisted that the college begin funding a major building fund and endowment campaign to take care of both current and future needs.<sup>34</sup> Finally on March 28, Ober once again accepted the Presidency.<sup>35</sup>

On February 1, 1927, President Ober asked for a leave of absence on account of ill health but continued his work with a reduced teaching load.<sup>36</sup> On October 27, 1927 Ober presented a letter to the Board that he be relieved from the presidency of the college at the earliest date possible with the least interruption to the work.<sup>37</sup> Registration went into effect on January 1, 1928.<sup>38</sup> Before being relieved, in 1927 Ober was honored by Franklin and Marshall College with the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.<sup>39</sup> Henry Ober had only a little more than a decade to live, dying in 1939 at age 61.<sup>40</sup> The building Ober Hall was clearly named after him, and it was designed with an L shaped three-story brick structure of colonial design with two wings.<sup>41</sup> Each of these wings were 149

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<sup>19</sup> Schlosser, 76.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Williamson, 96.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Schlosser, 90.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Williamson, 103.

<sup>41</sup> Schlosser, 200.

and 161 feet long respectively, with a commodious lounge at the junction of the wings.<sup>42</sup> Ober Hall made it possible to room on the campus a large number of students housed in private homes in the borough of Elizabethtown.<sup>43</sup> The Ober Residence for men was dedicated on October 15, 1960.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Benowitz and Depuydt, 36.