

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



Jacob Gible Meyer (1884 - 1951)

In 1905, graduate of Elizabethtown's class of 05, Jacob G. Meyer, would first join Elizabethtown College's staff. Meyer would go on to teach History and Geography, and would later serve as Elizabethtown College's president.¹ J.G. Meyer had been teaching science at the College since 1911. During 1915, the faculty requested that the Board of Trustees approve a new facility and then in 1916, J.G. Meyer presented a sketch of the building to the Board during a meeting.

Jacob Gible Meyer was said to be typical of the faculty at the time during President D.C. Reber's administration. Meyer was raised on a farm stock that was deeded to his family by William Penn. Additionally, his father and grandfather were elders in the Church of the Brethren. After completing his secondary education, J.G. Meyer taught in public schools until eventually receiving a degree in Pedagogy at Elizabethtown College in 1905. Meyer then began teaching science at Elizabethtown Academy, then going on to receive an A.B. degree in 1910 in Agriculture from Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster. In the same year, Meyer returned to Elizabethtown College to teach physics and chemistry.² J.G. Meyer was one of sixteen faculty members at the

¹ Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 48.

² Williamson, 48.

College at the start of the decade.³ At the time of Elizabethtown College's creation, there was much anti-higher education sentiment among the churches. J.G. Meyer made the assertion that this sentiment was due to the fact many of the Brethren forgot the long history of the church's relationship with higher education. Meyer also guessed that this anti-education sentiment was because the Brethren was composed of many farmers who lived in rural areas where higher education was not present.⁴

J.G. Meyer was elected as Second Vice President when H.K. Ober attended the World Sunday School Convention in Japan. During both Ober and Schlosser's absence, Meyer basically served as the chairman of the College faculty. Additionally, when Ober went to Columbia, Meyer occupied the presidency for three years before his return. Under Meyer's administration, the College eventually became fully accredited, allowing students to receive degrees.⁵ Meyer's first year as president was in 1921 and throughout his administration many significant events would take place, such as the Fairview Hall's dedication on June 7. The first floor of the hall contained living quarters for professors while the upper floors were dormitories. The Maples, a double brick building on College Avenue, along with two double cottages to house faculty members, were also built during Meyer's presidency. The College's Alma Mater lyrics were created during J.G. Meyer's first year as president: "We hail thee Alma Mater dear, As now we sing thy praise. O let thy walls and storied halls Resound with endless lays. (Chorus) We love thy sons so noble. Thy daughters fair and true; We love thee ever, oh E. C., And thy colors Gray and Blue. (Verse 2) The strong and fair alike do share The labours of thy hand. Together they proclaim always Thy glory through the land. (Verse 3) As long as breezes 'round thee blow, And countless ages roll, May Heaven's blessings on thee rest While we thy name extol."⁶



By the time H.K. Ober was ready to return to Elizabethtown in the end of 1923, J.G. Meyer decided to present his resignation to the Board of Trustees, as he wanted to pursue further education and earn a PH.D. However, he was to stay in his position as president until a successor could be appointed.⁷ After H.K. Ober was elected back into the presidency, J.G. Meyer went to New York University on a fellowship, then earning his PH.D in 1926. During the years of 1925-1939, Myer served as Dean of the School of Education at a Brethren college in North Manchester, Indiana, known as Manchester College. Meyer then spent the 1938-1939 school year visiting the University of Chicago and Northwestern University as a professor. 1940, J.G. Meyer became

³ Ibid., 68.

⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁵ Ibid., 92.; Jean-Paul Benowitz, Peter J. DePuydt, "Elizabethtown College" (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 69.

⁶ Ibid., 93.

⁷ Ibid., 96.

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President of Milton College and held the position until his retirement in 1944. Meyer passed away on March 6, 1951.⁸

Around the time when plans for a gymnasium to be built were being hindered, J.G. Meyer was soliciting funds for another building with the help of the Gibble family. Meyer's mother had already been soliciting funds for the science building in the previous years, and through the 1919-1921 College Campaign, all money and pledges from the Gibble family were put into the Gibble Science Building Fund. In 1925, *Our College Times* reported: "At a recent reunion of the Gibble family, that clan, which has long had this project in its care, and which has already massed a considerable sum of money in pledges and cash, took definite steps to attain their goal. A number



of solicitors were appointed to solicit the members of their family in the various communities, for financial aid."⁹ The Gibble family ranged far and wide, with donations being made from as far as Illinois. At the end of 1926, faculty and a committee made up of the Gibble family were authorized by the Board of Trustees to create final plans for the Gibble science building. J.G. Meyer presented plans for the building twelve years earlier, and it was dedicated as the Gibble Science Hall on May 26, 1928, finally completing his vision for a science building at Elizabethtown College. This Hall was a testament to the College's dedication to the modern day education and the sciences.¹⁰

"The College faculty in 1924. Notables include Elizabeth Myer and five presidents: Henry Ober, Ralph Schlosser, A. C. Baugher, J. G. Meyer, and Harry Nye."¹¹

A few months after I.N.H Beahm's death on November 11, 1950, J.G. Meyer died a few months later in Seattle.¹² An incident was recorded in *Our College Times* on January 16, 1935, detailing an incident regarding J.G. Meyer and the old Chapel bell: In the spring of 1911 rumors spread over the campus that Professor J. G. Meyer would soon be married... At midweek, Professor Meyer left the campus for the ceremony which was held in Brooklyn, New York. In keeping with old tradition, the students prepared a rousing welcome for the newlyweds. ... An orchestra equipped with homemade instruments provided the music for the night-shirt dance around a huge bonfire. To top it all the Chapel bell pealed forth the joyful welcome.. The ringing of the bell and the towering flames seemed quite real to the town's residents and the fire department went to in-

⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰ Ibid., 100.

¹¹ Ibid., 178,

¹² Ibid., 186.

investigate. The fire ladders almost reached the scene of the celebration before they were appraised of its nature. Somewhat insulted, the older members of the department demanded an apology and the collegians were forced to eat "humble pie." Worst of all, the ringleaders of the disturbance were arraigned before a Church Council and required to give a strict account of their misdemeanor."¹³

On July 15, 1916, J.G. Meyer presented a sketch of plans for a science hall. After much discussion within a committee composed of Meyer and other faculty members, it was decided more concrete plans would be presented at a future meeting. On August 29, 1916, a detailed floor plan of the building was estimated to cost \$50,000. The final report was to be approved at a future meeting of the Board, and the committee was asked to start canvassing funds for the building upon approval.¹⁴ Despite having some troubles finding canvassers for the project, on February 11, 1918, the committee reported that \$1,500 had been contributed so far. The project was then headed by the Gibble clan and eventually resulted in the erection of the Gibble Science Building during the year 1927-1928. The building was officially dedicated on May 26, 1928.¹⁵ During D.C. Reber's administration, J.G. Meyer conducted Bible Institutes of one or two days in the churches of Eastern and Southern Pennsylvania.¹⁶ The first session of the Homeric literary was held on June 10, 1911, with J.G. Meyer serving as chaplain.¹⁷ In order to fill the vacancy of President Ober when he requested leave on July 19, 1920, J.G. Meyer was elected as Vice President on August 22, 1920, since R.W. Schlosser was off campus.¹⁸

As previously mentioned, the Board of Trustees elected J.G. Meyer as the Second Vice President and asked him to serve as Chairman of the Faculty while President Ober was absent. This arrangement was unchanged until Ober resigned on March 8, 1921, which prompted the Board of Trustees to ask Meyer to take on all of the committees which Ober had been serving on. The Minutes of the Board during this meeting read: "For the remainder of the school year 1920-1921 the administration of the College is to be in the hands of a committee of five members of the Faculty. This arrangement is to be practically the same as obtained when H. K. Ober was in Japan on a leave of absence during the fall term." J.G. Meyer was then elected to the presidency of the College on April 22, 1921, and assumed his duties on July 1, 1921. He presented his resignation to the Board of Trustees on January 19, 1924, serving until a successor was found. Meyer was very prepared to serve as the president during his administration as he received a bachelor's degree of Pedagogy from Elizabethtown in 1905, an A.B. degree from Franklin & Marshall in 1910, and an A.M. degree from Columbia University in 1915. He also started working toward his doctorate at Columbia University in 1917. During his time as Chairman of the Faculty in 1920-1921 and his three years of President of the College, there was much improvement in the courses offered and

¹³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵ Ibid., 67.

¹⁶ Ibid., 74.

¹⁷ Ibid., 81.

¹⁸ Ibid., 87.

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the attainment of accreditation for the College with the State Department of Public Instruction.¹⁹ The editor of *Our College* times stated in the issue of January 30, 1924, "During the past three years of President Meyer's administration the College made a greater forward advancement than during any other period of its history. It was largely accomplished because of his perseverance that Elizabethtown College was standardized on December 21, 1921, and received full state recognition with the privilege of granting degrees in liberal arts, finance, commerce and science...The College has grown from an Academy and a College to a College and an Academy. Through the efforts of President Meyer the courses of the school were revised and standardized. His quiet and unassuming personality have won form."²⁰ In



connection with the acceptance of his resignation, the Minutes of the Board on January 19, 1924, state: "The resignation of President J. G. Meyer was received and accepted with the proviso that he continue in office until his successor is elected. This action was taken by the Board with regret because of the faithful services rendered by President Meyer and the pleasant and congenial relations that existed during the term of his administration, as well as his loyalty to the principles of the Church of the Brethren"²¹

The College received news in a letter on January 13, 1922, that it would receive accreditation. This milestone under J.G. Meyer's administration marked a new age for the history of Elizabethtown College and after announcing the news at chapel services, a holiday for declared for the remainder of the day.²² Various female and male quartets became prominent under J.G Meyer's administration as well, with those quartets participating in literary societies, special college occasions, and programs among civic clubs and churches.²³

Starting as early as July 18, 1916, interest began to grow among Faculty and Trustees for a science building to be erected.²⁴ J.G. Meyer, at the time a member of the faculty, presented the Board of Trustees with a drawing of the science building.²⁵ The Board of Trustees responded well and appointed J.G. Meyer, J.W.G. Hershey, and S.H. Hertzler to continue planning. At the next

¹⁹ Ibid., 89.

²⁰ Ibid., 89-90.

²¹ Ibid., 90.

²² Ibid., 104.

²³ Ibid., 112.

²⁴ Ibid., 153.

²⁵ Ibid., 153-154.

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meeting, the committee made a recommendation to the Board of Trustees: “Your committee recommends for a Science Building a structure not less than 45 x 90 feet (preferably larger), four story in height, including the basement.” The floor plan was estimated to cost around \$50,000 and while the Board of Trustees deferred the report's final disposition to another meeting, the committee was to canvass funds in the meantime. J.G. Meyer was part of the Gible clan and began soliciting funds from them for the building, heading as far west as Ohio and Indiana to do so. During Jesse Ziegler’s Endowment Campaign in 1919-1921, all funds and pledges secured from the Gible clan were added to the Gible Science Building fund. The Gible clan usually held family reunions on the campus, but the day was approaching when they would have a building named after them. On October 26, 1926, the Board of Trustees authorized a committee of the



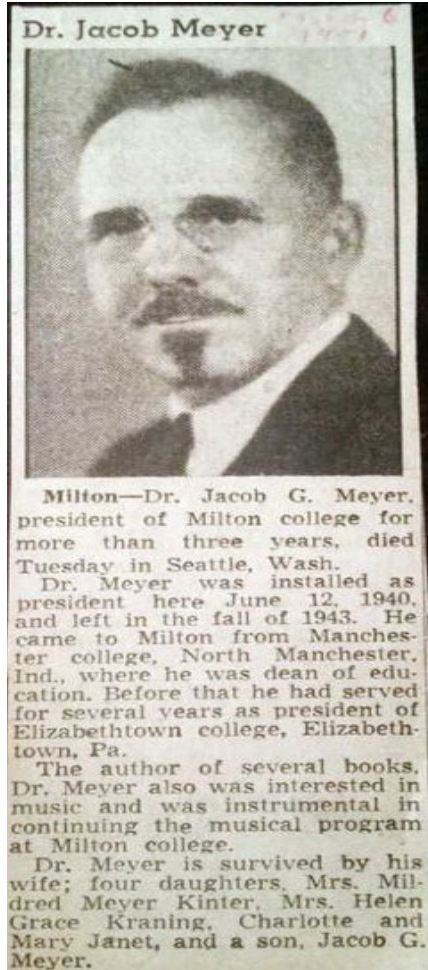
Gible clan with H.K. Ober and J.Z. Herr to create tentative plans for the building. Bids opened for the building on May 30, 1927, and Mr. Kast (the architect) was asked to report them to the Board of Trustees. A building committee was created to consummate the erection of the building and then Luther Wohlsen and Company of Lancaster continued with the construction of the building. The Gible Science Building was dedicated on May 26, 1928.²⁶

The *Etonian*, yearbook of the Senior Class, was published in 1922 and was dedicated to J.G. Meyer. It contained pictures of the members of the four college classes, extracurricular groups, administrative officers, Faculty, and campus scenes.²⁷ Jacob G. Meyer, 1884-1951: Jacob G. Meyer was a prominent alumnus of Elizabethtown College and passed away during A.C. Baugher’s administration. He was born on the Meyer farm near Fredericksburg in 1884 and was the son of Jacob Wenger and Leah Gible Meyer.²⁸ Meyer received a Pd. B. degree from Elizabethtown College in 1905, an A.B. degree from Franklin & Marshall College in 1910, an M.A. degree from Columbia University in 1915, and a Ph.D. degree from New York University in 1926. Meyer taught several years in rural schools of Pennsylvania, two years at the Elizabethtown Academy, five years as an instructor at Elizabethtown College, two years as an instructor in general science at the Horace Mann High School, New York City, and two years as professor of Education at Elizabethtown College, 1918-1920. Meyer was asked to serve as Chairman of the Elizabethtown College Faculty on August 22, 1920, during the absence of R.W. Schlosser, and on March 22, 1921, he was elected as President of the College, serving until 1924. During the beginning of his administration Meyer laid the foundations for erecting the Gible Science Hall and spent much time soliciting funds from the Gible clan. He was also partly responsible for the College receiving accreditation from the State Council of Education on December 19, 1921. Though, Meyer resigned

²⁶ Ibid., 154.

²⁷ Ibid., 167.

²⁸ Ibid., 229.



from the presidency in order to receive his doctorate from New York University, which was granted in 1926. From 1925-1939, Meyer was the Dean of the School of Education at Manchester College, Indiana, while serving as a visiting professor at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. Meyer's next venture saw him taking on a new position as President of Milton College in Wisconsin from 1904-1944. The latter years of his life were spent in Seattle, Washington, where he was involved in the preparation and publication of education textbooks for public schools, standardized test materials, and other research findings. J.G. Meyer was ordained to the Christian ministry by the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren in 1910. J.G. Meyer died in Seattle on March 6, 1951.²⁹ The Minutes of the Board record an expression of sympathy and tribute to J.G. Meyer on March 8, 1951, two days after his death: "We, the Faculty and students of Elizabethtown College, note with a sense of deep loss the homegoing of J. G. Meyer, minister, educator, and author. His contact with our College has continued throughout the years through his visits to his brother Professor E. G. Meyer. J. G. Meyer served as instructor in our College and he contacted a large part of our constituency."³⁰

Information from Find a grave:

Find a Grave, database and images

(https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/190968521/jacob_gibble-meyer: accessed June 21, 2024), memorial page for Jacob Gible Meyer (16 Mar 1884–6 Mar 1951), Find a Grave

²⁹ Ibid., 230.

³⁰ Ibid., 230-231.

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Memorial ID 190968521, citing Evergreen-Washelli Memorial Park, Seattle, King County, Washington, USA; Maintained by DB (contributor 48387802).

Jacob Gible Meyer

BIRTH: 16 Mar 1884 Fredericksburg, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, USA

DEATH: 6 Mar 1951 (aged 66) Seattle, King County, Washington, USA

BURIAL: Evergreen-Washelli Memorial Park Seattle, King County, Washington, USA

MEMORIAL ID:190968521

Parents: Jacob W Meyer 1862–1939, Leah Gibbel Meyer 1864–1956,

Spouses: Anna Jane Royer Meyer 1884–1941 (m. 1910), Martha Marie Nelson Meyer 1910–1985

Siblings: Joseph Gibbel Meyer 1882–1969, Samuel Gibbel Meyer 1885–1969, Levi G Meyer 1890–1977, John Meyer 1893–1902, Ephraim Gible Meyer 1895–1970,

Ezra G Meyer 1898–1979, Amos Gible Meyer 1903–1926, Solomon Meyer 1905–1906, Infant Son Meyer 1909–1909,

Children: Leah Mildred Meyer Kintner 1912–1981

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