

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



Ralph Weist Schlosser (1886 – 1978)

Elizabeth Doster Souders Schlosser (1888-1976)

Ralph Weist Schlosser was one of two students who were the first to graduate from Elizabethtown College in 1911. As the college was not yet accredited, their diplomas noted they were “worthy of the degree of Bachelor in Liberal Arts.”¹ Lewis D. Rose and Ralph W. Schlosser were Elizabethtown’s first college first year students in 1907 where they signed up for a four-year academic program leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree.² Schlosser was a member of the College’s Advanced Literary Society which held its first meeting on June 10, 1911. Schlosser oversaw “furnishing papers and discussions.”³ He was also a part of the College’s 1905 baseball lineup as pitcher.⁴ Pictured to the left is Elizabethtown College’s First Baseball Team, 1905.⁵

¹ Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 – 1970* (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown College, 1971), 76.

² Richard Kerwin MacMaster. *Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries* Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Society, 1999), 169.

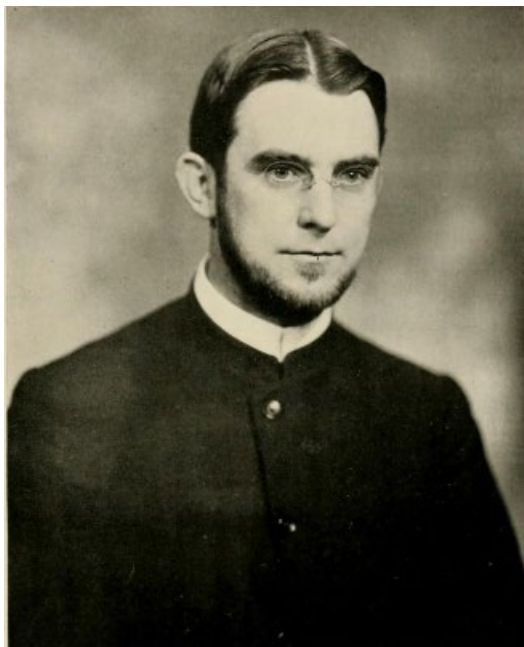
³ Schlosser, 81.

⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁵ Ibid., 59.

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On February 11, 1918, Schlosser was elected Vice President of the Board of Trustees.⁶ On August 22, 1920, J. G. Meyer was elected Vice President because Schlosser was off campus taking part in the Jesse C. Ziegler Endowment Campaign. Later Schlosser ask for a leave of absence for graduate study at Columbia University.⁷



The Jesse C. Ziegler Endowment Campaign was a project with the goal of standardizing the College through raising money. It began on January 2, 1919. Ralph W. Schlosser was put in charge of the campaign. The amount needed for standardization of the College was \$500,000. "In order to facilitate travel in the solicitation of the churches, I. W. Taylor and Schlosser were appointed by the trustees to purchase an automobile for the use of the solicitors." Schlosser along with I. W. Taylor went in a red, used Model T. Ford, house to house campaigning among members of the various Brethren congregations.⁸ On July 19, 1920, a report to the Board of Trustees showed the total amount raised in cash and pledges amounted to \$270,000. On December 12, 1920, a report to the Board of Trustees indicated \$385,000 had been received.⁹ "The Endowment Campaign was completed on February 17, 1921, and the grand total received in cash and pledges amounted to \$420,000. This amount

together with the inventory of the assets of the College made a total of \$550,000, the amount reported to the State Department of Public Instruction.¹⁰"

⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁸ Ibid., 97-99.

⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰ Ibid., 100.

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In 1922, two intercollegiate debating teams were organized. The teams were coached by J. S. Harley, I. S. Hoffer, and R. W. Schlosser¹¹ “Elizabethtown College was a member of the Debating Association of the Colleges of Pennsylvania and R. W. Schlosser served as Secretary of the Association for several years. This association annually made the selection of the question for debate among the colleges of Pennsylvania.”¹² Schlosser was also on the Faculty Male Quartet, which was very popular, being called to as many as twenty churches a year. The quartet was organized in 1917 and continued to perform until 1926. “This quartet consisted of Chester H. Royer, first tenor; E.G. Meyer, second tenor; R.W. Schlosser, first bass; and A.C. Baugher, second bass.”¹³

“The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the founding of the College was observed on November 13 and 14, 1925. Dean R. W. Schlosser spoke about the academic offerings of the institution.”¹⁴ On October 27, 1927, the Board of Trustees relieved H. K. Ober from his presidency of Elizabethtown College due to his failing health. On November 29, 1927, the Board unanimously elected Ralph W. Schlosser to the presidency of the College.



“The man selected for the presidency of the Board began his teaching career in a two-year term in the public schools of Lancaster County. He was an instructor in high school subjects in Elizabethtown College from 1907 to 1911, a professor of languages and English from 1911 to 1918, Vice President of the College and Professor of English from 1918 to 1921, Dean of the College from 1922-1927, President of the College from January 1, 1928, to 1941, with the exception of the year 1929-1930 spent in graduate study. From Elizabethtown College he received the degree B. Pd. in 1907, and the A. B. degree in 1911; from Ursinus College he received the A. B. degree in 1911, the A. M. degree in 1912, and the Litt. D. degree in 1932; from Columbia University he received the M. A. degree in 1922 and in 1930 completed the residence requirements for the Ph. D. degree. He also took courses in Religion at Bethany Theological Seminary, and at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, in 1929-1930. In addition to courses taught at Elizabethtown College over a period of more than sixty years he also served as Professor of English in six summer sessions at Juniata College and in an extension course for Franklin and Marshall College. He devoted much time to the work of the church as a Trustee of Bethany Theological Seminary, a member of the General Brotherhood Board, and an evangelist in

¹¹ Ibid., 111.

¹² Ibid., 112.

¹³ Ibid., 113.

¹⁴ Ibid., 114.

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the Church of the Brethren. His interest was also manifested in the program of the Young Men's Christian Association, Rotary International, and the Pennsylvania German Society.¹⁵

Although Schlosser assumed more responsibility as President, he remained as involved as ever in student affairs and clubs. A Faculty Club was organized on January 3, 1930, to cultivate more sociability within the Elizabethtown Faculty. R. W. Schlosser was the president of it.¹⁶ On October 30, 1934, President Schlosser was appointed Faculty Advisor of Forensic Arts club.¹⁷ The play chosen by the class of 1927 was Macbeth and it was coached by President Schlosser. Elizabethtown



College made its entrance into intercollegiate basketball on December 8, 1928. "President Schlosser tossed the ball at center in the old gymnasium in Rider Hall and thus officially opened the program of intercollegiate athletics at Elizabethtown College."¹⁸

As the student body grew, it was decided that the gymnasium in Rider Hall would no longer suffice. On May 30, 1925, the plans for a new gymnasium on the campus of Elizabethtown College began. It would be called the Student Alumni Gymnasium Auditorium. President Schlosser and Treasurer J.Z. Herr were asked to secure plans for a gymnasium that cost approximately \$60,000.¹⁹ In 1927, President Schlosser, Frank W. Groff, J.Z. Herr, and John M. Gible were appointed as a building committee by the Board of Trustees of the College.²⁰ The Student Alumni Gymnasium was dedicated on May 25, 1929, with remarks by President R. W. Schlosser.²¹

¹⁵ Ibid., 121-122.

¹⁶ Ibid., 136.

¹⁷ Ibid., 141.

¹⁸ Ibid., 149.

¹⁹ Ibid., 151.

²⁰ Ibid., 152.

²¹ Ibid., 153.

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President Schlosser was always open to ways to improve Elizabethtown College. In 1934, the idea for a new social room came from the Women's Student Council. The previous area for social gatherings was the southeastern corner room in Alpha Hall, but this space was increasingly inadequate. The students presented the issue to the Board of Trustees on January 1, 1935. "President Schlosser appointed Rebekah S. Sheaffer, Luella M. Bowman, and J. Z. Herr as a committee to consummate the project." They were given rooms E and F on the eastern side of Alpha Hall to convert into new social spaces. The work was completed in 1935 and the social room added new elegance to the College's social meetings. A commentary from the *Etownian* for 1936-1937 puts it best:

"The room was crowded with students, professors, and friends. In an impressive service in the light from the fire place and the candles, which are always kept burning, the students and President R. W. Schlosser set forth the ideals of the social life on the campus. May we always cherish the product of our perseverance and remember the ideals that were set forth in the dedication of this beautiful room."²²

²² Ibid., 164-165.

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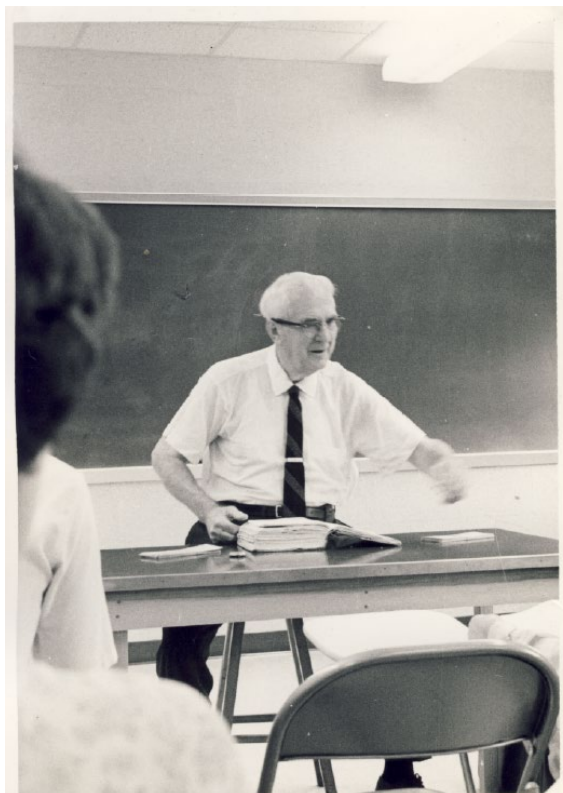
On February 14, 1930, R.W Schlosser was re-elected as president of the college through a unanimous vote by the Board. After twelve and a half years in his role, R.W Schlosser resigned from being president on July 1, 1941, and instead elected to teach English at Elizabethtown College the following year.²³ “In announcing the resignation of President Schlosser, *Our College Times* of January 30, 1941, states:

As unexpected as a thunder bolt came the announcement on January 3, 1941, that President R.W. Schlosser had resigned as the head of Elizabethtown College, thus terminating a twelve and one-half years’ reign at the helm of the institution.²⁴”

President R. W. Schlosser’s resignation from his role as President was to take effect July 1, 1941. He was succeeded by A.C. Baugher who accepted the position on March 15, 1941.²⁵ Pictured left is A.C. Baugher²⁶

Schlosser remained in the classroom until his retirement at age 84 in 1970. He was granted the title of President-Emeritus in 1962. On June 2, 1962, the Church of the Brethren hosted a Recognition Luncheon for Ralph W. Schlosser as part of the College’s Alumni day. *The Conestogan* of 1962 contains an account of this event:

Alumni Day, 1962, witnessed, among other noteworthy events, the honorary recognition of one of Elizabethtown's most diligent, devoted, and indefatigable faculty personalities, Ralph W. Schlosser. A vital, active member of the College, the professor has been associated with Elizabethtown College since 1905 when he first trod the halls of Alpha as a student. R. W. Schlosser was a firsthand observer of the tremulous changes that transpired as Elizabethtown College emerged from a one-building, activity-less, conservative shell into its ever developing state. For a period of twelve and one-half years he was President of the institution; however, his heart remained true to teaching, and the completion of his work witnessed the return of the pedagogue to his preferred profession. The welfare of the students always a major concern, Dr. Schlosser, an English instructor with a fondness for Shakespeare, indicated his opinion of a liberal education as being one which necessitates idea-diverse professors as well as varied courses. The College owes much to this man of many merits, who received his most deserved President Emeritus title during the 1962 return of the Alumni.²⁷”



²³ Ibid., 124.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 175.

²⁶ Ibid., 174.

²⁷ Ibid., 271.

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On April 25, 1964, Earl Kurtz, treasurer of the colleges suggested that the board apply for a loan to build a women's dormitory. The building would be named the Schlosser Residence for Women on July 11, 1966. The groundbreaking for the building was on September 9, 1964.²⁸ The Schlosser Residence for Women²⁹ "In accepting the honor of naming the new women's dormitory The Schlosser Residence for Women, and after recognizing Mrs.

Schlosser for her numerous sacrifices during her husband's long term of service to the College he (Schlosser) said:

I consider it an honor to have my name placed on the walls of this magnificent residence for women. But names placed upon walls will crumble away, names engraved in iron and bronze will rust and tarnish with the passing years. Even writing in books is a fascinating work, but pages will also pale and crumble in time. My greatest joy over a period of three score years at Elizabethtown College is not manifest in the growth of our physical plant from one main building to twelve major structures, nor in the growth of a Faculty from twelve to over one hundred, nor in the increase of our student body from one hundred to over fourteen hundred. My greatest lingering joy is not in this things but in having had the privilege of writing my personal philosophy of life into the lives of thousands of students who were in my classes. From these students who are now teachers, school administrators, business and professional men and women go forth influences the results of which eternity alone will reveal.³⁰

In 1971, Ralph W. Schlosser wrote a history of Elizabethtown College



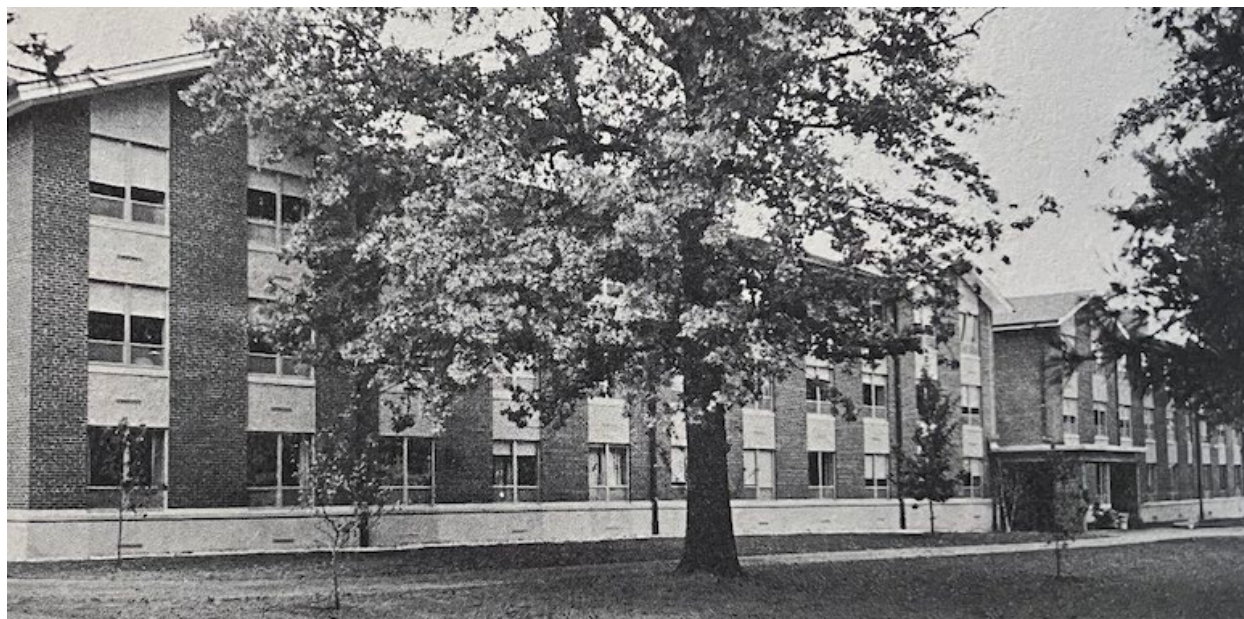
²⁸ Ibid., 257-258; 8.

²⁹ Ibid., 258.

³⁰ Ibid., 259.

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(1899-1970). In 1975, he received the Lancaster County alumni group's first Distinguished Lancaster County Alumnus award. During the spring commencement on May 9, 1976, Ralph Schlosser received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Elizabethtown College for his service as a churchman, teacher, and administrator.³¹ In his retirement, Schlosser and his wife lived at the Church of the Brethren Home in Neffsville. Schlosser tended to a sizeable rose garden on the Home grounds. He loved to have visitors see it and share the blossoms with others.³²



Ralph W Schlosser was born in 1888 and died in 1978 at the age of 90. He is buried at the Mount Tunnel Cemetery in Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Schlosser was married to Elizabeth D. Souders-Schlosser and they had four children: Floy Schlosser Heistand (1910-1997), Mary Elizabeth Schlosser (1915-1915), David E. Schlosser (1917-2009), and Nancy Joan "Jo" Schlosser Horner (1925-2009).³³

³¹ "Honorary Degree Conferred at E-town," *Susquehanna Times*, May 12, 1976.
<https://panewsarchive.psu.edu/lccn/sn89077138/1976-05-12/ed-1/seq-5/>

³² "Of This and That," *Mount Joy Bulletin*, June 12, 1974. <https://panewsarchive.psu.edu/lccn/sn89077567/1974-06-12/ed-1/seq-8/>

³³ "Ralph W Schlosser (1888-1978) - Find a Grave...", accessed May 28, 2024, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/32723997/ralph-w-schlosser>; "Dr. David E. Schlosser," LancasterOnline, October 28, 2009, https://lancasteronline.com/obituaries/dr-david-e-schlosser/article_709a98e9-160b-5317-8b64-9212cd35414e.html.

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