

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



Rufus P. Bucher (1883-1956)

One of the first six students to enroll to Elizabethtown College at the time of its opening was Rufus P. Bucher from Mechanic Grove, PA., who would come to be part of and known as one of the “Faithful Six.”¹ When the Board of Trustees reorganized on January 2, 1939, Rufus P. Bucher was elected as chairman by Eastern Pennsylvania.²

Regarding the birth of intercollegiate basketball for Elizabethtown College, around 1929 the Board of Trustees started noticing sentiment for intercollegiate sports. A committee of four, with Rufus P. Bucher on the committee, was formed to frame a policy regarding intercollegiate basketball. The committee reported the following to the Board of Trustees on February 13, 1929: “We regret very much that concessions have been made to students on this question that were not authorized by the Board, but since they have been made, and the Faculty as well as a large percentage of the patrons do not object to a limited number of controlled or supervised games, exclusive of football, the committee decides to permit such intercollegiate contests as may be agreed upon annually by the Administrative Committee and the Athletic Council and approved by the Board of Trustees and also that no financial concessions be made to students on the ground of athletics.”³ To implement the adoption of this report, the Board of Trustees outlined the following

¹ Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 40.; Allyson Nace, “Rufus P. Bucher” (Landmarks and Legends Essay, Elizabethtown College, 2017) 1.; Jean-Paul Benowitz, Peter J. DePuydt, “Elizabethtown College” (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 12.

² Schlosser, 128.

³ Ibid., 148.

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rules to govern intercollegiate athletics: “First, that the athletic program of the College be under the supervision of the Athletic Council composed of a member of the Alumni Association, two members of the Faculty, two students, and the Physical Director; Second, that the Managers of the teams submit to the Administrative Committee of the Faculty through the Athletic Council the schedule of games for approval; Third, that athletes be in good scholastic standing; Fourth, that no student under twenty-one years of age may participate in intercollegiate sports without permission of his parents or guardian; Fifth, that a member of an athletic team cannot play in the games if he uses tobacco; Sixth, that no more than eighteen basketball games be scheduled for the year 1929-1930.”⁴

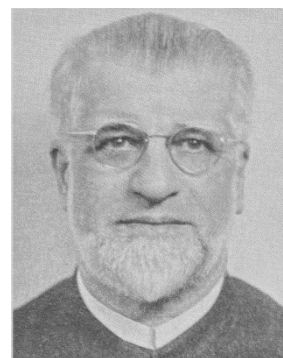
In a Board meeting on April 17, 1935, the Trustees discussed the need for a better library and appointed a committee to co-operate with the Administrative Committee of the Faculty for considering the practicability of erecting a new Library, with Rufus P. Bucher as one of the members. Unfortunately, a lack of funds hindered this project until the administration of President A.C. Baugher in the 1940s.⁵

At the inaugural program for A.C. Baugher, Rufus P. Bucher, Chairman to the Board of Trustees, gave part of the induction speech during the service.⁶ On July 29, 1954, Rufus P. Bucher made the following request to the Board of Trustees in a letter: Dear Brethren of the Board:

“Due to my physical condition I am not able to perform my duties as I should as Chairman of the Board. I would kindly ask to be relieved of that position. My interest in the College will continue. I am sure you understand. Humble submitted, Your servant, Rufus P. Bucher.”⁷

During the dedicatory service of the new Zug Memorial Library and the day of Elizabethtown’s fiftieth anniversary, Rufus P. Bucher delivered the acceptance speech.⁸ Rufus P. Bucher was one of the people to receive an alumni chair, in recognition of meritorious service to the College.⁹ On September 23, 1949, at 10:30 am in the Student Alumni Gymnasium, Rufus P. Bucher gave the invocation during the day’s service.¹⁰

Rufus P. Bucher was the second past Chairman of the Board of Trustees to pass away during President A.C. Baugher’s administration. He was universally called “Rufus,” and was born near Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County, on his father’s farm. His mother was Anna Pfautz Bucher, and his father was George Bucher, who were married twice and had a family of thirteen children. George Bucher wanted to show the Brethren to a new neighborhood, so he moved his family near



⁴ Ibid., 148-149.

⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁶ Ibid., 176.

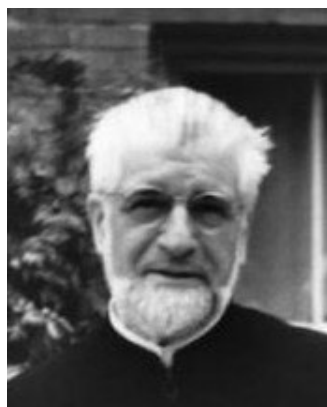
⁷ Ibid., 177.

⁸ Ibid., 195.

⁹ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰ Ibid., 208.

Quarryville in Lancaster County. On the corner of this same farm, the Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren would be built in 1897. Rufus Bucher's father was one of the early trustees of



Elizabethtown College to have a son enroll at the institution. At College, Rufus met Naomi White, another student at the College who would one day be his wife and start a family of ten. Rufus Bucher and his wife pursued teaching and later started farming on a plot of land adjoined to his father's farm. The life on this farm was described in the *History of the Church of the Brethren in Eastern Pennsylvania*: "Theirs was an earnest and gladsome home where industry, piety, responsibility, and faithfulness were mixed with kindness, patience, and gay humor." On May 11, 1901, Rufus was called to the Mechanic Grove Church to be part of the Christian Ministry, and he had extensive experience in evangelism. Rufus Bucher had great influence due to his ability to easily present gospel messages to common people, his

Pennsylvania German accent and vocabulary, and because of soul searching messages that he delivered.¹¹ He was involved in evangelistic meetings within most of the churches of Eastern and Southern Pennsylvania and in at least thirteen states of the Union. During the time of his sermons, thousands of people were added to the church. His sermons were focused on the simple presentation of the Gospel's truths rather than sensationalism.

In 1947 Rufus Bucher was given the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Bethany Theological Seminary. The *History of the Church of the Brethren of Eastern Pennsylvania, 1915-1965*, commented on the event: "The citation called attention to the Brethren pattern of life which cares more for spiritual graces than for ostentation and luxury. It regarded Brother Rufus as a notable example of this pattern of life. It called attention to his sacrificial service." Rufus Bucher passed away in April, 1956. He is buried in a beautiful rural cemetery, behind a church that he had lived to see erected. The church was located near the original where Rufus had once faithfully served for many years.¹² The Board of Trustees paid to the following tribute to his widow and family: "Today we join you in mourning. You have lost a companion and father, and we a colleague in the work of Christian education. You and your husband spent one year less than half a century in sharing the successes and refreshing experiences that have come to you while you were establishing your home, rearing a great family, building a church, and serving a community. Without a doubt you must also have been called upon to stand together through hours of trial and testing. Ralph Schlosser. We are especially mindful of his relation and service to Elizabeth-town College. He was one of the first six students to enroll in Elizabethtown College in the fall of 1900. He was a member of the Board of Trustees for forty years, fifteen of which he served as Chairman of the Board. Eighteen months ago the Board elected him as Chairman Emeritus. This indicates the esteem in which he was held."

¹¹ Ibid., 231.

¹² Ibid., 232.

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Information from *Uniting Work and Spirit*:

Rufus P. Bucher was one of ‘The Faithful Six’ who were enrolled at the time of Elizabethtown College’s opening. Rufus was trustee George Bucher’s son, who would later become chairman to the Board of Trustees and serve in the position for fifteen years.¹³ None of “The Faithful Six,” the first to enroll at the College, ever graduated, even Rufus P. Bucher, who eventually served as Chairman to the Board of Trustees.¹⁴

Rufus Bucher became Chairman to the Board of Trustees when H.K. Ober passed away on March 12, 1939, and would remain in the position until 1954. Rufus’s father, George Bucher, was one of the College’s founders and served on the early Board of Trustees. A Brethren Preacher, evangelist and farmer, Rufus Bucher was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1913. Rufus Bucher never graduated from Elizabethtown College, but his voice was always a strong one within the church when it came to supporting higher education and Elizabethtown College. Most of Rufus’s children attended the College and his granddaughter, Christina A. Bucher, is currently chair of the department of religious studies. In 1989, the Rufus P. Bucher Meetinghouse was build and named in his honor.¹⁵ Rufus was the last chairman of the Board of Trustees to wear plain dress. During this time, the College continued to slowly move away from the more conservative nature of the Church of the Brethren.¹⁶

Rufus P. Bucher requested to be relieved from his position as Chairman of the Board of Trustees on July 29, 1954. Rufus had been on the Board of Trustees for forty years and held the position of chairman for fifteen of those years.¹⁷ Bucher’s resignation letter is filled with his characteristic humility and kindness “Dear Brethren of the Board: Due to my physical condition I am not able to perform my duties as I should as Chairman of the Board. I would kindly asked to be relieved of that position. My interest in the College will continue. I am sure you understand. Humbly submitted, Your servant, Rufus P. Bucher.” The request was granted and the Board of Trustees designated Bucher as Chairman Emeritus. Two years later, Bucher would pass away on April 19, 1956.¹⁸ Rufus Bucher was truly one of the “Faithful Six” who had stayed faithful to the College till the very end.¹⁹



George Bucher (1845-1923) was married to Anna Pfautz (1840-1881). They had 9 children, 7 of whom survived childhood: Mary (1867-1947), Emma (1867-1870, died young),

¹³ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴ Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 47.

¹⁵ Williamson, 133.

¹⁶ Ibid., 134.

¹⁷ Ibid., 194.

¹⁸ Nace, 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 195.

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Elizabeth (1869-), Sarah (1871-1918), Aaron (1873-1952), Rufus (1875-1875, died young), George (1876-1950), Annie (1878-1916), and Benoni (1881-).

Anna Pfautz's sister, Fianna Pfautz (1850-1937) married Peter Phillipy (1843-1878). They had 3 children: Mary (1872-1969), Leah (1874-1927), Peter (1877-1949)

Following Anna Pfautz's death in 1881, widower George Bucher and widow Fianna Pfautz Phillipy married in 1882 and had 3 children: Rufus (1883-1956), Fianna (1886-1915), William (1888-1971).

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