

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



Vera Hackman (1903 - 2000)

Vera R Hackman was born in 1903 and passed away at the age of 94-95 in 2000.¹ She was Buried at the Heidelberg Church of the Brethren Cemetery Myerstown, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania.² Vera Hackman was a student at Elizabethtown College and graduated in 1925, then earning her master's degree from Columbia in 1936. She went on to teach in Pennsylvania public schools for two years in Harlan County, Kentucky. Hackman came back to Elizabethtown in 1944 as the dean of women, with her journalism skills leading her to teach the first journalism course at the College.³

The Y.W.W.A., also known as the Young Women's Association Welfare Association, was first organized on February 11, 1921, with Vera Hackman as its first President. Out of the Y.W.W.A. and the Y.M.W.A. organizations, eventually came the Student Council.⁴ The Etonian of 1923 stated the purpose of these organizations:

*"The object is to foster the spirit of brotherliness and helpfulness, to support such projects as will contribute to the common good and to stimulate interest in maintaining a distinctly Christian atmosphere in Elizabethtown College."*⁵

¹ Jennifer Lloyd, "Vera Hackman Apartments" (Architectural History of Elizabethtown College Essay, Elizabethtown College, 2017) 1.

² "Vera R. Hackman," Find a Grave, accessed January 29, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/35181087/vera_r-hackman.

³ Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 165.

⁴ Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 110.

⁵ Ibid.

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With this purpose outlined, it's no surprise then that these organizations also came together to champion for the approval of a Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., known as the Young Men and Women's Christian Association. After five years of pressure from both organizations, the Board of Trustees granted the request on January 1, 1926, to form a Young Men's Christian Association and a Young Women's Christian Association.⁶ Vera Hackman was among the faculty members who eventually received an Alumni Chair, which is given in recognition of meritorious service to the College.⁷

In 1963 when President McAuley championed for the creation of an organization that could better channel communication among students, the Faculty, and administration, Vera R. Hackman represented the Elizabethtown College administration on this council as the Dean of women.⁸ For a period of twenty-four years, Vera R. Hackman served in the position of Dean of Women with



the goal of making Elizabethtown College's institution a better place for women.⁹ Vera Hackman is a native to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and started teaching in the public schools of the Commonwealth at Colerain Highschool, where she was Principal for several years and a teacher of English, history, and Latin. Vera also taught at the Pine Mountain Settlement school in Harlan, County, Kentucky, for two years, and then at the high schools of Lykens Valley and Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.¹⁰ Elizabethtown College then called for her to teach at the institution as a teacher of history and English in 1944, which was the start to her twenty-four-year relationship with the College as a teacher and Dean of Women. During her time as a teacher, Vera Hackman was the first to offer a course in Journalism at the College, and up until 1973, she had been a full-time Professor in the English Department.¹¹

Before being called to Elizabethtown College as a faculty member, Vera R. Hackman was an Alumni of the College and received an A.B. degree in 1925.¹² She then went on to earn an M.A. degree from Columbia University in 1936 and earned the Teacher's College Professional Diploma in 1950.¹³ While serving as a Teacher and Dean of Women at Elizabethtown College, starting in 1944, Vera Hackman was the adviser of the Sock and Buskin, the *Etownian* and *Conestogan* staffs, and the Women's Honor Society. In connection with the Women's Honor Society, Vera was also responsible for the women's Honor House Program.¹⁴ Aptly put by Jennifer Lloyd, a student who previously wrote a biography on Vera Hackman for the college, "Because of her continued focus

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 202-203.

⁸ Ibid., 301.

⁹ Ibid., 335.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lloyd, 1.

¹³ Schlosser, 336.

¹⁴ Ibid.

on encouraging participation from women, Hackman was deemed, 'a woman 'ahead of her time' in realizing women's increasing role in society."¹⁵

Vera Hackman was also a member of the Pennsylvania Association of Women Deans, the National Association of Women's Deans and Counselors, the American Association of University Professors, the American Association of University Women, Delta Kappa Gamma Society, and the Modern Language Association; however, in local circles, Vera was active in the program of the Business and Professional women.¹⁶ Elizabethtown College Bulletin of June, 1968, comments on the influence of Vera Hackman:



"During her twenty-four years in the post of Dean of Women Miss Hackman has dedicated herself to making Elizabethtown College a better place.

*Miss Hackman will retire as Dean, but she will not sever her strong ties with the College. She will become a full-time member of the English faculty. She will also retain the title Dean of Women Emerita, an honor bestowed on her by the Board of Trustees at its annual spring meeting."*¹⁷

In relation to her various student-related activities, other social and special events, such as May Day, were developed at the College. Additionally, Miss Vera Hackman was honored by the women students of the College at a dinner on February 27, 1968, held in Myer Dining Hall to commemorate her twenty-four years of service as Dean of Women. The President of Students in the Myer residence for Women, Karen Lee Nuber, presided over this event. During the event, Vera was presented with a corsage by the Freshman Women's Honor Society, and a birthday cake by Donna Powers, President of the Royer Residence for Women. As a guest speaker, R.W. Schlosser commented on her service to Elizabethtown College. At the closing of the event, Vera was presented with a pewter tea service by the President of Schlosser Residence for Women,



¹⁵ Jennifer Lloyd, "Vera R. Hackman" (Architectural History of Elizabethtown College Essay, Elizabethtown College, 2017), 2.

¹⁶ Schlosser, 336.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Joanne Glider.¹⁸ The location of this event being Myer Hall was especially significant, as just nearly 10 years earlier, Vera Hackman was present for the dedication of Myer Hall on May 11, 1957, in which she gave a scripture lecture during the dedicatory program for the day.¹⁹

Vera Hackman's life at the time of her retirement from Elizabethtown College is accurately detailed in a biography created by Jennifer Loyd, an alumnus of the College, in 2017:



*"Hackman's career came to an end in 1973 when she retired from the College; however, from all her time and service at the College, she accumulated many awards, some occurring while she was still teaching. For example, in 1961, 'the Conestogan,' the school yearbook, was dedicated to her in recognition of her influence on the students at Elizabethtown. Then, in 1968, she was named dean of women emerita. Her recognition continued in 1978, when she was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Elizabethtown College. The College also honored Hackman with the Educate for Service to Humanity Award in 1983. Furthermore, because of her pursuits to teach immigrants English, she received the Jefferson Award in 1984. On February 2, 2000, Hackman was one of thirteen individuals to be awarded the Centennial Medal from the College. The final honor the College bestowed upon her was in the Fall of 2000, right after her passing. The College decided to dedicate the new apartment buildings to Vera Hackman, as a memento to her service and contributions to the College. Vera Hackman will never be forgotten, 'she was, in a sense a Renaissance woman, a great lady, a grand dame.'"*²⁰

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¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 198.

²⁰ Lloyd, 2.

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