A Greyhound Timeline

1868

On Nov. 30, the Rev. Joseph and Mrs. Sarah (Woods) Ward arrived in Yankton, Dakota Territory. According to another source, they arrived on Nov. 6 to assume pastorate of the recently organized Congregational church.

1870

Joseph Ward began teaching private school in the rear room of Judge Bartlett's office at Second and Cedar streets to promote the interests of Christian education in the new region.

1872

The Rev. Ward founded Yankton Academy.

1874

The Academy became the first public high school in Dakota Territory.

1881

The City of Yankton donated $11,000 and a tract of 25 acres of land to Yankton College, and thereafter called the property "College Hill."

1882

A red Dakota quartzite cornerstone was laid for the first building on campus June 15. The structure was named Middle Hall, serving as the entire college for those pioneer students. Later known as the Conservatory, it housed a recital hall, classrooms, studios and a library for music education.

1883

The Rev. Ward was formally elected the first president of the college Jan. 16.

1884

President Ward gave an inaugural address.

1889

On Nov. 2, South Dakota was admitted into the Union. On Dec. 11, president and founder Dr. Joseph Ward died of diabetes. The closing period of Ward's life, from the founding of Yankton College in 1881 to his death in 1889, coincides with the period of struggle for South Dakota's statehood and its final achievement. He was a leading figure in that cause from beginning to end.

In October, the Yankton College football team, named "The Athlon Club," played its first game. They lost to the University of South Dakota 12-0.

1890

On June 18, Alice Reynolds Kingsbury, Yankton, was the first female YC graduate and was appointed instructor of French.

1915

The Garden Terrace Theatre was completed, a one-of-a-kind open-air theatre that was specifically designed for Shakespearean plays, concerts and commencements. It was dedicated June 15 at a performance of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." A uniquely landscaped Italian garden with enclosing hedge, garden wall and terraced stage was the beginning of a new era of entertainment for the college and Yankton culture.

1916

The nickname, "Greyhounds," was proposed by Bert "Bones" Fenenga ('16), captain of the 1915 basketball team and all-state center in football, who believed that wearers of the yellow and black uniforms had to win "by speed and courage rather than by physique." Greyhound also became the official title of the college yearbook, replacing the Okihe.

1931

Joseph David Mendel ('31) put Yankton College on the national sports map. Nicknamed "Smokey Joe" by a Sioux City sportswriter, he tied the world record for the 100-yard dash at 9.5 seconds in Huron on May 23.

Yankton College merged with Fargo College after the Congregational College of North Dakota closed.

1932

Redfield College closed and merged its School of Theology with Yankton College to become the Yankton College School of Theology. It provided religious education and seminary training to men and women. A unique, five-year plan for the Bachelor of Theology degree combined the advantages of professional training, which included serving nearby churches during the senior year, with those of a full liberal arts education. This degree qualified the student for ordination and service as a Christian minister.

1962

Yankton College School of Theology closes after merging with the Mission House Seminary of Plymouth, Wis., to form the United Theological Seminary in New Brighton, Minn.

1967

The Warren Campus Center opened.

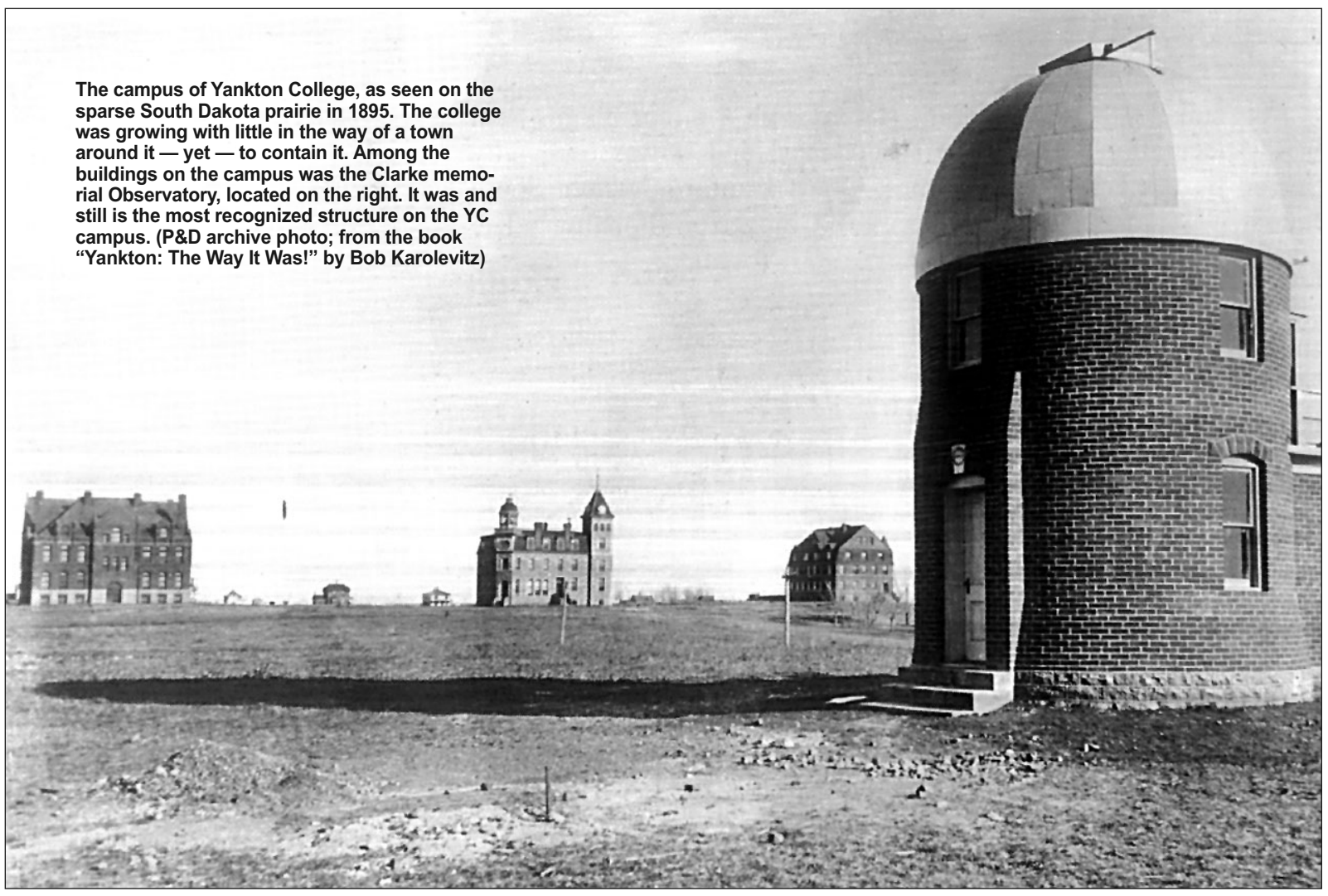
1969

Crane Athletic Field was renamed Crane-Youngworth Field to honor life-long YC coach and athletic director Carl Youngworth.

1984

Yankton College closed its doors Dec. 21.

SOURCE: YANKTON COLLEGE



The campus of Yankton College, as seen on the sparse South Dakota prairie in 1895. The college was growing with little in the way of a town around it — yet — to contain it. Among the buildings on the campus was the Clarke memorial Observatory, located on the right. It was and still is the most recognized structure on the YC campus. (P&D archive photo; from the book "Yankton: The Way It Was!" by Bob Karolevitz)

Yankton College Still Nurtures A Rich Legacy

Dakota's First Institute Of Higher Learning Didn't Vanish Into Oblivion When Its Doors Closed In 1984

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
The Press & Dakotan

Yankton College suffered an unexpected and painful close in December 1984, and its absence is still felt in the heart of this community.

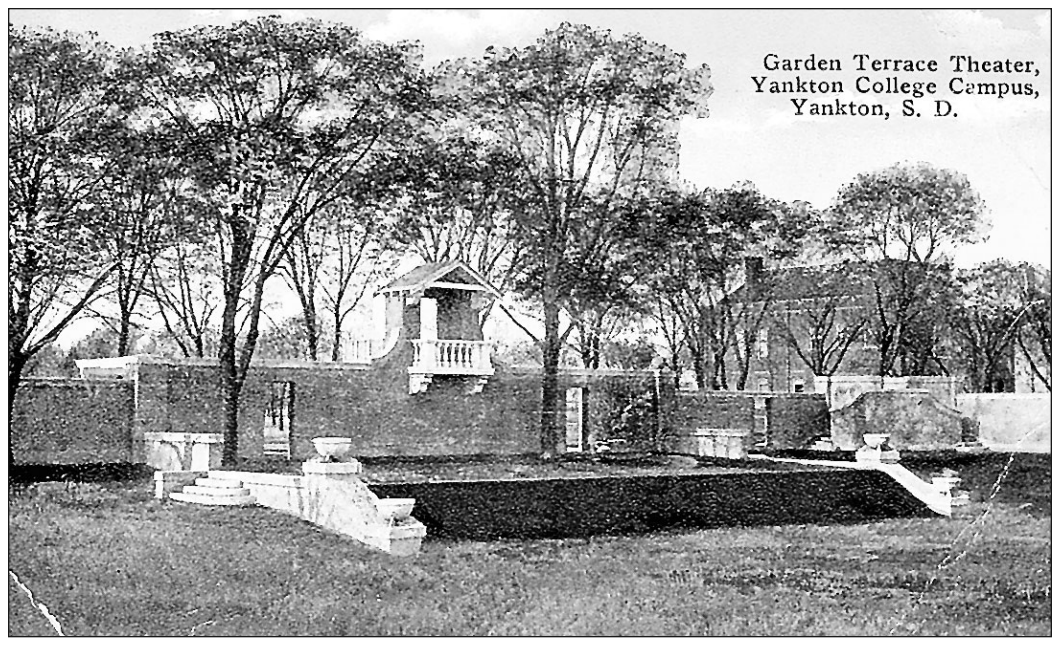
But surprisingly, so is its continued presence.

Though the campus that once housed Yankton College is now the Yankton Federal Prison Camp, the work and spirit of the school is carried on in the office of Yankton College Executive Director Jan Garrity. Located in the Summit Activities Center, the office is home to a vast array of memorabilia from the college's past, as well as transcripts of all the alumni.

Sports trophies, photo albums and clothing are among the items from the college that can be found on display. Piece by piece, they tell the story of a small liberal arts college founded in 1881 on a lonely hilltop. During the next 103 years, its students excelled in sports, academics, drama, music and other areas.

But the college also works toward the future, maintaining an alumni association, offering scholarships and providing a licensed ministry program, among other efforts.

Before Dakota Territory's first college collapsed amid financial turmoil, it played a large role in shaping the fabric of the Yankton area and far beyond with its commitment to academic and spiritual excellence.



YANKTON COLLEGE ARCHIVE PHOTO

An artist's rendering of the Garden Terrace Theater, Yankton College's unique open-air theater that was the brainchild of Professor George Durand in 1913. It was used for many play productions and other school activities.

Yankton College was the dream of Rev. Joseph Ward. But it was born of solid foundations. Many men and women came to Dakota Territory in the latter half of the 19th century looking for fertile ground upon which they could plant their futures. However, few had dreams that would blossom as beautifully as Ward's. Fewer still would see their dreams have such a profound impact on so many.

When the first Yankton College classes were held in a small house along Walnut Street in 1882, Ward saw the Congregational institution as a natural progression of the earlier efforts of himself and others. It was no accident that the first college in Dakota Territory was founded in Yankton.

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