

The Wickenden Years - Part 1



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Mr. Batchelder, the headmaster of Loomis Academy, knew of Mr. Lillard's search for a new headmaster. He also knew a young teacher at Deerfield whom he had met during athletic contests at Loomis. Mr. Batchelder called Mr. Wickenden to inform him of the opening.

On a sunny, clear day in May, James W. Wickenden first saw the school that would soon become his life. Before the phone call from Mr. Batchelder, he had only known of the

school by name. On his first visit to Tabor, Mr. Wickenden was impressed with the small boat program and the magnificent harbor. A few days later, Lemuel LeBaron Dexter, the president of the Board of Trustees, and Mr. Lillard returned Mr. Wickenden's visit by going to see him at Deerfield. The day they chose was Deerfield's Spring Day. They saw Mr. Wickenden in the midst of what might have been chaos if a strong leader were not directing the day's events. On the trip back to Tabor, the decision was made to offer the position of sixth headmaster of Tabor Academy to Mr. Wickenden.

Mr. Wickenden was born in Toledo, Ohio in 1906. During the years 1920 to 1924, he attended Waite High School in Toledo. In his four years at Waite, he took a college preparatory course and won three letters in football. He also

participated in the Glee Club and was elected president of the student body.

From 1924 to 1928, Mr. Wickenden attended Oberlin College as a pred-med student. The school was so impressed with his academic potential, they recommended him for two



Headmaster Wickenden pictured above with former Headmaster Lillard.

consecutive years as a Rhodes Scholar. As in high school, Mr. Wickenden pursued sports and music at college, interests he still pursues to this day. He was elected as

help cope with these and other problems, the Board of Trustees gave Mr. Wickenden complete control over the school. Helping him in these times were John "Cap" Carlson and Mr. John Kern.

After the war, Tabor entered an unprecedented period of growth. Mr. Wickenden started a drive for more students. He shunned the old style of recruitment by personally escorting boys and parents around the school. Also, new dormitories were purchased after the war to house the increased student population. During the post-war years, large additions were made to the waterfront program, including the acquisition of the yawl **Tabor Boy**, formerly **Edlu II**.

In 1952, the school purchased a large, 19-acre plot of land adjacent to Route 6. This purchase assured that any further building would be built above the reach of flood waters. Mr. Wickenden's decision to buy the land marked a high point in his first ten years as headmaster. It reflected also his ability to make important decisions, not only in land acquisition, but in all aspects of his position as headmaster. During Mr. Wickenden's first decade as headmaster, enrollment had risen 116% and operational income was up 242%.

The hurricane of 1954 marked another point of change in the history of Tabor Academy. Alumni and friends of the school pitched-in and helped rebuild the school. Shortly after the storm, a plan was announced that a new campus would be built away from the water on the land obtained in 1952.

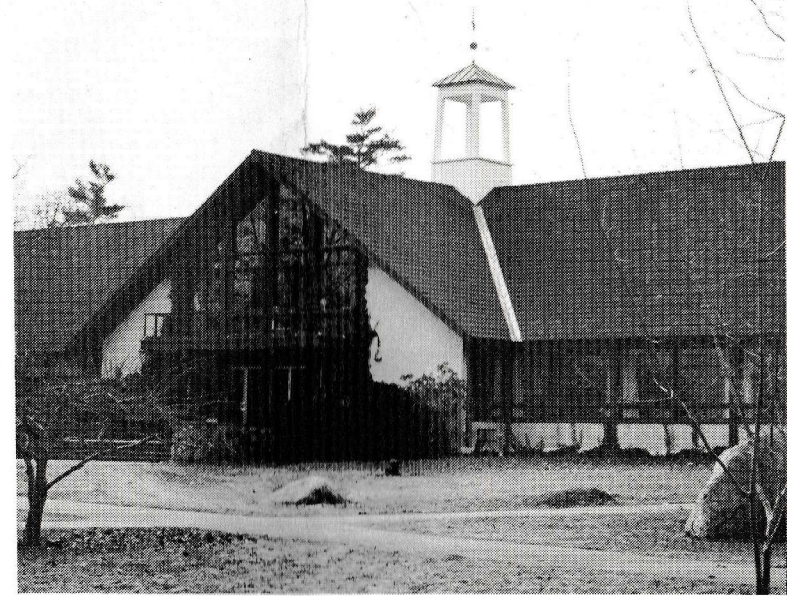
student body president at Oberlin in recognition of his leadership abilities. In 1928, he received his AB Degree and returned in 1928 and 1929 for his M.A.

The great depression caused many problems for the young Mr. Wickenden's plans in the medical profession. The crash had wiped out his father's position. At the time, he was in Europe with his young cousin. But, with his brother, Mr. Richard S. Wickenden, about to enter college and his mother ill, he decided from London to write his family of his decision not to enter medical school.

In 1930, Mr. Wickenden took a teaching job at Deerfield, where he remained except for a brief, two-year interlude, until 1942.

By 1942, Mr. Wickenden had decided it was time he led his own school. Among the schools he had looked at were Belmont, Greenwich Country Day and the Mackley School. He decided on Tabor because of its location and the challenges it would offer.

Little did he or the school realize the trials and tribulations which were to come during those first few years. The war took a heavy toll on the school, both economically and in terms of staff. Out of fifteen teachers that were present the first year, only four remained for the following year. Some of the older students also left to enlist. To stop them from leaving, Mr. Wickenden started what he called a "busy boy" program in which he tried through a series of classes, sports, and club activities to keep the boys so active they would not think of leaving. During this time, all of the necessities of life were very hard to come by. Every possible solution to the shortage problem had to be looked at and even some unusual means were taken into consideration. To



The Hayden Library-Science building marked the beginning of new construction on the Tabor campus.

In 1955, the Charles Hayden Foundation gave a "proviso" gift of \$1 million for the construction of a new library-science building. The trustees unanimously accepted the gift and started plans to raise an equal amount. The building went into service on September 7, 1957, thus marking the end of one era at Tabor and the beginning of a new one.

Next issues: Modernization Of The School...A Dream Come True.