

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Brainerd Society began as the Brainerd Evangelical Society on February 23, 1833 to "promote Christian Missions and the Evangelization of the World." The Society was named in honor of David Brainerd, a young missionary to the Native Americans of the Delaware River Valley region from 1744 until his death in 1747. At his log cabin headquarters near Martin's Creek, Society members erected a monument to David Brainerd, which was dedicated in 1894 and rededicated during the Brainerd Jubilee in 1934. The original members led campus prayer meetings, participated actively in leading the community churches of Easton, and demonstrated an avid interest in foreign mission work.

For 40 years, the Brainerd Society was the only religious organization on campus. In 1874, President Cattell organized the student-run Christian Brotherhood to promote the "spiritual interests of its members." In addition to its own meetings, the Brotherhood was given charge of the evening campus prayer meetings, formerly the responsibility of Brainerd. It has been argued that since the purpose of the Brotherhood was to support the spiritual life of its members while Brainerd's purpose was Christian evangelism, no rivalry existed between the two organizations. However, Brainerd Society minutes (May 4, 1880) suggest differently:

Moved and carried that a committee of three be appointed to confer with Dr. Cattell on improving our organization by merging the Christian Brotherhood into Brainerd.

Minutes of the next month's meeting note that Cattell opposed the union. Soon after the Brainerd Society became affiliated with the YMCA, the Christian Brotherhood was discontinued.

In 1877, Brainerd joined forces with the Young Men's Christian Association to become the Brainerd Society of the YMCA, and the members of the Brainerd Society were immensely proud of their identification with a rapidly growing intercollegiate organization. Membership in the YMCA was touted in the Brainerd Society-printed Freshman Bible, and in one instance, Brainerd meeting minutes (November 1, 1887) were approved only after the word "Society" was replaced by "Association." In 1905, the Brainerd Society of the YMCA acquired its first General Secretary, Edmund Graham. The General Secretary was an employee of the YMCA and was paid to spend half his effort on YMCA endeavors and half on college work. As part of the Association, Brainerd broadened its mission to include the social welfare as well as the spiritual interests of Lafayette students.

Perhaps the greatest symbol of this new focus was Brainerd Hall, donated by James Renwick Hogg in 1902 to give students a social meeting place. Designed by Charles Webber Bolton '80, Brainerd Hall contained a bowling alley in the basement; a public hall and rooms for religious offices on the first floor; and on the second floor, a 250-seat auditorium that was equipped with a stage in 1923 and converted into the Little Theater. From this location, the Brainerd Society of the YMCA was able to coordinate a great variety of activities. The Society provided a number of social services for students including operating a lost-and-found bureau, a job placement bureau for graduating seniors and alumni, and an off-campus housing location service. Members were also involved in recreational activities such as holding dances during football season, and broadcasting away-games and international sporting events on campus radio.

In addition to its social responsibilities, Brainerd continued its religious ministry. Members worked with underprivileged boys in Easton, sponsored Sunday vesper services on campus, and conducted Sunday church services at the Chestnut Hill Church in 1925 when the congregation had no minister. Brainerd maintained its avid enthusiasm for foreign missions through the Student Volunteer Mission Band, which had begun shortly after a Dwight L. Moody summer religious conference in 1886. The Band was composed of students who seriously intended to become foreign missionaries after graduation. Band alumni who had returned from the foreign mission field often reported on their pioneering work at the annual meeting of the Brainerd Society held at Commencement. The Band held weekly Sabbath meetings to discuss branches of foreign mission work, and it organized a missionary museum and library.

From its inception, the Brainerd Society had depended on the voluntary financial support of its student members. The fall membership drive was an annual tradition on campus, which provided vital publicity for the

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Society as well as funding. In 1928-29, the Student Council decided that the fee would be included on the student's bill, which made membership in both the Brainerd Society and the YMCA automatic upon registration. However, as College historian Albert Gendebien points out, "Not all young men appreciated receiving YMCA membership by virtue of becoming students at Lafayette." Accordingly, official ties with the YMCA were severed in 1928-29, and a faculty member was appointed to act as the Society's advisor.

In 1947, President Hutchinson established the student-run College Church, and at the same time he guided the reorganization of the Brainerd Society. Dr. Hutchinson sought to make membership in Brainerd voluntary, believing that a group of interested students and elected officers would participate more actively. Over the next two years, however, the College Church performed the religious responsibilities of Brainerd so effectively that in 1949 the Brainerd Society disbanded and re-formed itself into the Brainerd Student Union. The mission of the Brainerd Student Union was "to establish and maintain facilities so as to provide for the social needs and social activities in all phases of student life at Lafayette College." In its new capacity, Brainerd was responsible for seven committees: Youth Services (YMCA Boys' Club), Maintenance and Supply, Recreation and Bowling, Motion Pictures, Book Exchange, Dance and Entertainment, and Publicity and Publications. In 1951, Hogg Hall (the former Brainerd Hall had been so renamed in 1944) was dedicated for these purposes.

By the mid-1950s, however, few of these committees' activities remained the responsibility of Brainerd. Hogg Hall was overseen by the chaplain; the bowling alleys had been moved to North Hall under new management; the Freshman Handbook was published by the Lafayette Press; and most of the dances were funded by the fraternities. In 1955-56, when the funding for student activities was changed so that budgetary approval became the responsibility of parent departments and the Student Council, the Brainerd Student Union found itself with little authority over the few assigned tasks that remained to it. In 1956, amid general feelings that Brainerd had become an expensive and unnecessary encumbrance to the College, the Brainerd Student Union was dissolved.

Although the old Brainerd Society was never revived, the name and primary mission of David Brainerd has always been honored at Lafayette College. When the Brainerd Student Union ended, the Earl Orwig Society for preministerial students became the David Brainerd Fellowship so that the Brainerd name would continue to survive on campus. Later, Chaplain Peter Sabey established the position of David Brainerd Assistant for a David Brainerd Project in Christian Work and Fellowship. In the late 1980s, a new Brainerd Society was established as "a fellowship of people seeking to explore the meaning of faith and to live out their calling as Christians" through weekly Bible study meetings.

BRAINERD DATELINE

1744	David Brainerd begins ministry to Indians
1747	David Brainerd dies
1833	Brainerd Evangelical Society forms at Lafayette College
1874	Christian Brotherhood established at Lafayette
1877	Brainerd Society joins YMCA. Brotherhood disbanded soon after
1884	Society erects monument at David Brainerd's log cabin missionary headquarters
1886	Student Volunteer Band for Foreign Missions organized at Lafayette
1894	Brainerd monument dedicated
1902	Brainerd Hall dedicated
1905	First YMCA General Secretary appointed at Lafayette
1923	Little Theatre added to Brainerd Hall
1928-29	Ties with YMCA severed; Brainerd Society fees put on student bill
1934	Brainerd Jubilee
1944	Brainerd Hall renamed Hogg Hall
1947	College Church established; Brainerd Society reorganized, membership becomes voluntary
1949	Brainerd Society becomes Brainerd Student Union
1951	Hogg Hall dedicated for Brainerd Student Union activities

- 3 Record Book of the Student Volunteer Band for Foreign Missions (December 1892)
Historical Sketch
Biographical sketches of Lafayette alumni who had gone to or Band members
preparing to go to the foreign mission field (classes of 1836-1884 are represented)
- 4 Brainerd Society Treasurer's Account Book, 1856-1867
- 5 Address: Robinson, T.H. Anniversary sermon before the Brainerd Evangelical Society
of Lafayette College, July 28th, 1867

Box 2

Folders - Unbound Materials

- 1 Brainerd Society Miscellaneous Records, 1938-
- 2 Brainerd/Hogg Hall Dedication Memorabilia: 1902, 1951
- 3 Publications - Prospectuses: 1906-07, 1920-21, Student Handbook 1928-29, 1936-39, 1992
- 4 Publications - College Calendars: 1936-38
- 5 Volunteer Mission Band - Miscellaneous Records
- 6 YMCA - Miscellaneous Records

APPENDIX I HISTORICAL SKETCHES

Account of the formation of the Volunteer Band for Foreign Mission, [Charles Pittman?], [December 1892?] (Box 1, Volume 3).

"Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration of the Dedication of Hogg Hall, February 24, 1951 (Box 2, Folder 2)

"History of Brainerd Hall," Professor D. Arthur Hatch

"History of the Brainerd Society," Dr. Robert Crosen

"The Brainerd Student Union and Its Activities," Dr. Bernard C. Marklein

"Notes of the History of the Brainerd Society," April 21, 1949 (Box 2, Folder 1)

APPENDIX II ADDRESSES

The following addresses are available in Special Collections: (Lafayette Collection, KA)

Allison, Matthew, "Sermon delivered before the Brainerd Evangelical Society, July 23, 1854 (Vol. 3).

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Dale, James W., "Our Father's Business for Our Father's Glory," July 23, 1862 (Vol. 4).

Yeomans, John W., "Address," April 3, 1838 (Vol. 1).

This address is located in the general stacks (252, B811):

Brainerd, Thomas, The last sermon of Rev. Thos. Brainerd ... preached before the "Brainerd missionary society" in the "Brainerd church," on the missionary field of David Brainerd, at Easton, Penna., July 22d, 1866 ... (missing as of April 14, 1992)