

## The Campus Beautiful

By Walton J. Brown

**A**s I drove up the entrance to the college for the first time, I saw that it was in great need of a face-lift. Cows grazed on the narrow strip of grass in front of the main buildings. The grounds around and between the facilities were rough and uneven. The buildings also presented quite an unattractive picture. The windows of



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the central building had no glass, only sheets of zinc nailed onto frames, and the outside finish of the buildings was a dull gray.

As I spoke to the business manager about improving the situation, we agreed, to begin with, to hire a bulldozer and level the entire central campus. Once this was done, I asked him to walk with me around the college entrance as I outlined a plan that would convert the institution into a beautiful center for the community, including the development of a park with lawns, paths, trees, shrubs, and flowers.

He listened carefully and respectfully, but immediately turned thumbs down on the proposal explaining, "Such a plan, though attractive, would take quite an amount to keep up in the future." I tried to convince him by describing the future benefits: "In your imagination can't you see students sitting out on the green lawn on a

Sabbath afternoon, some months from now, reading or singing to the accompaniment of a strumming guitar?" All to no avail! No funds could be found in the budget for such a worthless project.

Later I was able to convince the college board to authorize these improvements, but with this proviso: "You must raise the needed funds from outside sources." We asked everyone we knew to contribute and, within a year, with the help of students, faculty, and friends, we had the park, with tropical shrubs and flowers everywhere. We even included modern glass windows for the administration building! When constituents saw the improvements, they banded together and raised funds for two dozen park benches. Very soon the campus had been transformed. One Sabbath afternoon as I stood with the business manager in front of the main building, he looked at the park and said

quietly, "It is beautiful. It is worthwhile," as he gazed at happy students sitting in the shade of the trees.

I wondered, "Why did he have such a negative attitude?" Well, the school he attended had also been quite unkempt. The buildings were unplastered, it had dirt sidewalks, and the gardens were undeveloped. Many years before, a shed for a carpenter shop had been in the process of construction when it was decided to use it as a meeting place for a union quadrennial session. After the session the school administration decided to use this shed "temporarily" until a new building could be constructed. This "provisional" building was still in use, with just a few improvements, almost half a century later!

"As the teachers are, so will the students be," surely applied in this case, for graduates from that college, including the business manager, carried its influence into their work as ministers and teachers. Although their church buildings were rough and unattractive, they saw no need for anything better. That is what they had become accustomed to during their early years in school.

When I was asked to take over that same school many years later, it still had had few improvements. Since there had been plans for moving it elsewhere, it was felt that nothing additional should be spent on its upkeep. When I started to refinish one of the central buildings, an old-timer spoke to me earnestly, "Brother Brown, you should not be doing this. A previous leader said that unfinished buildings would attract more sympathy from the constituency and



more money from the board. Leave well enough alone."

However, I had found that this kind of appearance had the opposite effect. When progress was apparent, more financial help was forthcoming from both board and constituents.

Another of the elder church members said, "Brother Brown, the Lord is coming very soon, and you know that some day the government or the national church will confiscate this place. Why spend money on something that will be taken away?" I answered, "I want the Lord to find us occupying His school until He returns, trying to do the best possible for it," and added, "if the government or the national church should take charge, I don't want them to take over a pile of ruins. I want them to see that Seventh-day Adventists know how to maintain a fine institution!" After all, "In a special manner our schools are a spectacle unto angels and to men."<sup>1</sup>

Some school administrators measure all values by whether the investment will produce positive financial returns without considering esthetic results. However, certain intangibles touch the senses, affect the morale of students and teachers, and improve their viewpoint of ideals. These must always be kept in mind.

In planning . . . let the teacher seek to awaken an interest in beautifying the school-grounds and the schoolroom. A double benefit will result. That which the

pupils seek to beautify they will be unwilling to have marred or defaced . . . a habit of care-taking will be encouraged.<sup>2</sup>

He who created for man a beautiful world, and planted a lovely garden in Eden with every variety of trees for fruit and beauty, and who decorated the earth with most lovely flowers of every description and hue, has given tangible proofs that He is pleased with the beautiful.<sup>3</sup>

God is the author of all beauty, and only as we conform to His ideal shall we approach the standard of true beauty.<sup>4</sup>

True beauty will be secured . . . in coming into harmony with the laws of Him who created all things, and who finds pleasure in their beauty and perfection.<sup>5</sup>

Certain factors must be borne in mind when we think of building and maintaining an educational institution:

1. We must plan for beauty. This implies developing a master plan that includes attractive landscaping.

One college I visited had no such plan. The faculty consented to allow the students to lay out a volleyball and basketball court toward the front of the men's residence hall, right on the main campus. This was all right as long as it remained an invisible slab. But later, when it was decided to build a gymnasium, it was felt that the money spent on the slab should not be wasted. So, using the slab for its floor, the building was erected over the playing area, to the side of the campus, completely out of line with existing constructions. This building continued to be an eyesore for several years until the board decided to spend additional money to move the gymnasium to where it should have been in the first place had there been a master plan.

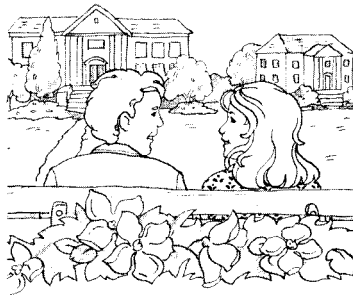
Incidentally, a master plan is *not* an authorization to spend money. It is only a way to reserve areas for future needs of an institution. It helps prevent expensive mistakes

like a chicken coop where a future dormitory ought to be situated. Too often, in order to avoid throwing away the money invested in a henhouse, a science building or a music hall may be badly located!

2. It is not necessary to be extravagant in creating and maintaining a beautiful campus. "God would not have His people expend means extravagantly for show or ornament, but He would have them observe neatness, order, taste, and plain beauty."<sup>6</sup>

3. False economy leads to allowing things to deteriorate—unpainted and unrepaired. Letting the paint peel off a door in order to economize on a paint job will sooner or later result in a much greater expense to replace the entire door. Keeping things painted, repaired, and in order not only improves the appearance of the school, but actually *saves* money.

4. Good campus maintenance also improves the morale of the school family. No campus should be unkempt because construction or improvements are in process. Indeed, for morale's sake, there should always be someplace on the school grounds that is being improved—a remodeling job, new sidewalks, better lighting, a new building, or a paint job. Students, teachers, and the constituency will thus see progress. However, this should not be used as an excuse for disarray. All disorder and mess should be restricted to the immediate area where work is being done, with the rest of the grounds in perfect order. The fact that a master plan is not complete should not mean that what is there will be unkempt. The main campus area should be leveled and filled with



shrubs, flowers, and lawn.

5. Great sums of money should not be spent for major improvements if it is likely that the school may be moved or expropriated. Minor expenditures must still be made in order to maintain the facilities and good appearance of the campus to its last day.

6. A special attempt must be made to maintain new buildings and equipment. I visited one college that had moved to a new campus. After many months the entire grounds still looked like the remnants of a battlefield. Not only that, but boxes of material were stacked up in classrooms and laboratories, though the buildings had long since been completed. Broken windowpanes and tiles in the new facilities went unreplaced. Fortunately, this situation did change, and the campus was converted into a showcase with which few other colleges could compare. However, it should not have taken so long!

7. The school may be simple and funds scarce, but the campus should be well maintained, clean, orderly, and in good repair. One junior college where I worked had simple buildings, but they were neat and spotless. Chairs had only straw seats, but they were painted and clean. There was no money for expensive trees or shrubs, but what greenery there was was trimmed, and the rough grass was mowed to look like a lawn. People who vis-

ited called it "the pearl" of the area.

8. Whatever we do to improve the appearance of our campuses will better represent the Lord, who is the real Owner. "The school is the Lord's property."<sup>7</sup> "[The grounds about it] should become a farm and a park, beautified with fragrant flowers and ornamental trees . . . that this place may become an object-lesson to those living close by and afar off."<sup>8</sup>

"The Author of all beauty, Himself a lover of the beautiful, God provided to gratify in His children the love of beauty."<sup>9</sup> It is He who "maketh grass to grow upon the mountains" (Psalm 147:8), spreading "earth's green velvet carpet, and [dotting] it with shrubs and flowers. Why has He clothed the earth and trees with living green, instead of with dark, somber brown? Is it not that they may be more pleasing to the eye?"<sup>10</sup>

Students and teachers should become accustomed to living in as pleasant surroundings as possible on this earth—in their homes and on the campus—that they may look forward to living in the wonderful beauties in heaven, and there "see the king in his beauty" (Isaiah 33:17). □

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), pp. 212, 213.

<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), vol. 2, p. 258.

<sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1909), p. 292.

<sup>5</sup> *Education*, p. 198.

<sup>6</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 257.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Education*, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1943), p. 185.