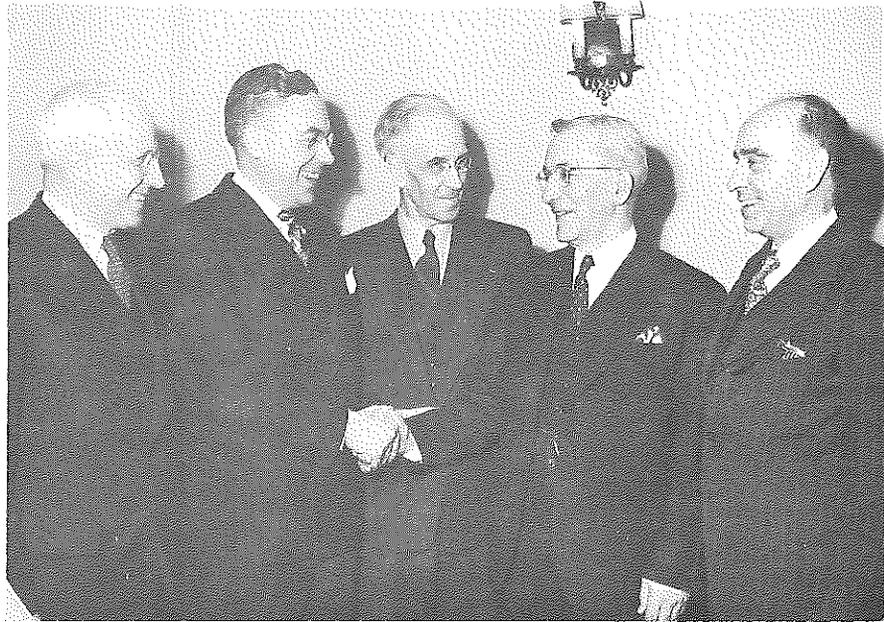


*Post-War
Years*

Dr. Dobson had skillfully guided the College through almost thirty years which had encompassed the trying times after World War I, a devastating depression, and World War II. It is not surprising that the years following his retirement were difficult. Had the task not been so formidable, the Board could not have found anyone more likely to succeed as principal than the highly respected Rev. Bruce Millar, nor the man who followed him,



*Dr. Dobson, Principal Emeritus,
showing Gertrude Huntly
Green Durand the chapel site*



*The new Principal, Rev. Bruce Millar, welcomed by Dr. Dobson in 1947.
Left to right: Rev. Gordon V. Thompson, Principal Millar, Frank Marlatt, Dr. Dobson,
Rev. Gordon Raymer.*

Dr. Stephen Mathers. Unfortunately, each stayed only two years before reluctantly submitting his resignation. Many factors were involved. Enrolment was seriously affected by the return of the St. Hilda's girls to England, and the changing patterns in registration due to the transition from war-time to peace-time. To complicate life further, there were shortages of funds and materials.

The New Chapel

Mr. Millar succeeded in completing the building project started by Dr. Dobson, and met the schedule for its opening. May 16, 1948, was a proud day for Alma and for Mr. Millar when The Rev. Gordon Siscoe dedicated the new Ella D. Bowes Chapel. Miss Bowes had been a generous contributor to the Chapel Fund and had laid the Cornerstone in June, 1947. The classroom wing adjoining the chapel and the new science laboratory were also opened at the same time. Thanks to the careful planning of Garnet Trevithick of the collegiate staff in St. Thomas, this lab was one of the most modern in Western Ontario.



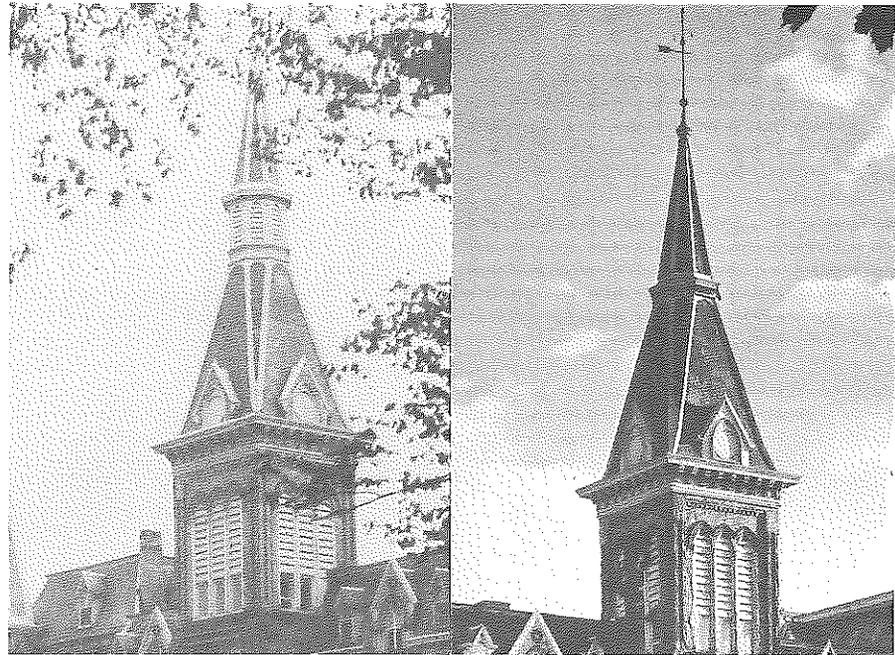
*Miss Bowes laying the
cornerstone of the chapel*



Morning Chapel Time

*The Tower
is Saved*

There was another spectacular event at Alma that year, and the chief actors were Mr. Millar, E. Forbes Raven, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board, with contractor Bill Green as special hero. One fall day Mr. Raven noticed that the topmost spire of the College was leaning slightly to the East and the lower section slightly to the West. It looked positively dangerous to the College and to human life and limb! Mr. Raven brought it immediately to the attention of the Board. They consulted an expert who, after a brief examination, stated that the whole tower must be torn down. The cost would be \$5,000. The Board approved it. But it will look horrible, said Mr. Raven and the Executive Committee. In desperation they called in their old friend Bill Green for another opinion. He climbed way up to the top, looked the situation over thoroughly and announced that if they acted quickly before the bad weather set in, he could remove the central straight section of rotted wood, eight and a half feet high (the bird cage, the girls called it), drop the top spire down onto the lower tower — all for \$2000. In two days it was done, solid heavy cribbing built inside, lumber greased so that it would slide easily, offending portion hacked away, the two parts of the tower held firmly together, and Alma's famous spire was saved.



The Original Tower

After repairs



*May Festival at
Alma College*

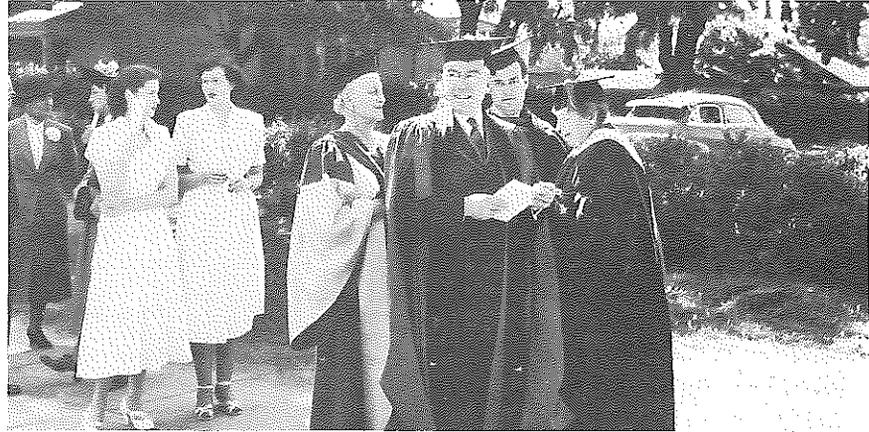


Life at Alma

In the late forties all the old traditions still found a place in the memories that students cherish — candlelighting, mischievous Angela, midnight feeds in Upper Mac tower rooms. There was also the music and laughter of the versatile Kier Barnes, and the powerful and beautiful voice of Marjorie Kelly (soon to be named Miss Canada) practising her vocal lesson for Miss Swain. At the same time, any administrator during his first year wonders if there will ever be an end to “Last year we did it this way”! This, too, made life more difficult for the principal of this period, as he struggled with reduced enrolment and mounting deficits.



Commencement Day



Principal Millar with Lady Eaton on his left



Tree Planting



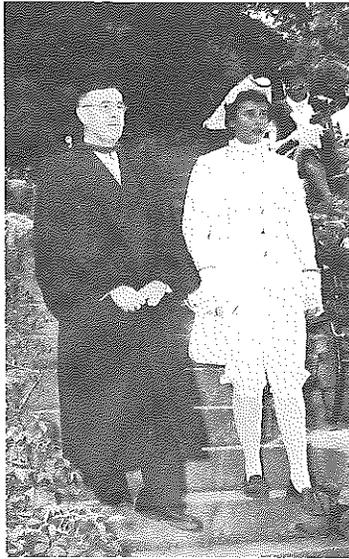
On November 11, 1949, Rev. Stephen J. Mathers was installed as the new principal following Rev. Bruce Millar who had resigned to become pastor of St. James Bond United Church in Toronto. The service was held at Central Church, and is vividly described by one of the students:

“We all wore our uniforms for the first time as a group and most of us felt proud as we walked to the church, preceded by the faculty and the alumnae. After the singing of a hymn Rev. John MacKinnon introduced our new principal in an inspiring and humorous address. Immediately after this was the Act of Installation by the Very Rev. Jesse H. Arnup. We’re all sure that in this inauguration we’ve gained a fine principal who will help us in many ways.”



*The New Principal 1949 — 1951
Rev. Stephen J. Mathers, M.A., B.D.*

Principal and Mrs. Mathers worked together to enrich the lives of the students during the two years that they were at Alma, and there are many references to their kindness in the *Almafilians* which always reflect the spirit of the school. They mention chapel talks, stories at candlelighting, and informal counselling.



*May Day with
Principal Mathers, May 1950*



The Dean, Miss Margaret Robb, and members of the staff, seem to have contributed to the interest and vitality of many departments, with Miss Harper, Dr. Hunter, Miss McGaw, Miss Grobb, Mrs. Knowles and Miss Johnston. There was music-making everywhere with the sparkle and leadership of Miss Barnes, Miss Swain, Miss Jolliffe and Miss Joanne Scarlett. In one year the Choral Club, led by Miss Scarlett, sang at the alumnae tea, church firesides, candlelighting (which was broadcast over CHLO), at Alma's Fashion Show, several Dramatic Club programmes, Chapel Services, Baccalaureate and Commencement. And Donna Martin was always the able and willing accompanist.



*Two of the
Christmas Carollers*

And after a full season of work in the Dramatic Club the girls wrote: "Miss Cutler, how can we ever thank you for keeping your temper and not getting discouraged when we don't remember our directions? We sincerely hope that the club will always stay the way you've built it up. It takes someone with skill and enthusiasm and lots of elbow grease. And you, J.C., have those qualities . . .".

One Saturday night a few enterprising girls decided to plan a special impromptu party — "A wake for the Alma Spirit". They enlisted an energetic group to clear the centre of Mac Hall, placed a long cardboard open box in the centre of the room, draped it in black crepe paper, turned off the lights and placed candles at the head and foot. The girls, wearing dark blankets, filed slowly past, humming a funeral march to the accompaniment of the organ, dropping paper petals into the "coffin" as they went. When all that was over, up went the lights, out came the food, and presto! The Alma Spirit was resurrected.

*New Chairman of
the Board*



*President Perry and Ruth Dobson
about 1956*



*The Principal and the President
after June Commencement*

The sudden death of Mr. W. F. Thomas was a serious blow. He had been the genial, confident, long-time chairman of the Board of Management who had led the College through many a crisis. Mr. E. Forbes Raven, whose father had preceded him on the Board, and whose mother, sisters, (and later his daughter), had attended Alma, was persuaded to assume the chairmanship since he had been Chairman of the Executive Committee. He was a graduate in Business Administration and a successful St. Thomas businessman. He served Alma with great skill and devotion and with the help of Dr. Dobson, members of the Board, the City and the County, had Alma back on her feet in a very few years.

Dr. Mather resigned in the spring of 1951. One of the first acts of the Board, in the early summer, was to persuade Dr. Dobson to come out of his well-deserved retirement and return as principal for two years for a modest honorarium. He left no stone unturned. He believed in Alma College and he felt that there was only one way for Alma to go — EVER FORWARD! One minute he was in a blue and white lab coat directing the maintenance gang of St. Thomas High School students he employed to help with the job — window-washing, polishing, painting, tidying up. Alma had to look clean and attractive even if it meant flipping over the long threadbare rug in the main hall and painting it a nice rich red. (This was done more than once the night before the arrival of some V.I.P. — secret!) The next minute he was the composed, well-groomed gentleman chatting with prospective parents, or planning a project or campaign with some of his loyal supporters and friends like Forbes Raven, Dr. Floyd Maine of London, Walter Gibson of Tillsonburg, Walter Rogers of Sparta, Dr. George Kennedy, Walton Peart, Percy Spackman, Gordon Lemon, Grevice Howse, Miss Stella Venning, Mrs. Hazel Jackson Aylsworth, E.F.S. Sanders, Manly Miner, Harvey Jay . . . He had some vacancies to fill on the staff too. Mrs. Norma Doering of Chester-ville, who had been active in church and community and Chairman of the Board of Education, proved to be an understanding and excellent assistant dean.

Dr. Dobson's choice for dean was Mrs. Steele Sifton (Flora Mooney) who was the niece of a former Alma dietitian, Miss Florence Mooney. Mrs. Sifton, a recent widow like Mrs. Doering, was a graduate of Victoria College, with a B.Ed. from the University of Saskatchewan. Before her marriage she had been lecturer in French and Dean of Women at Regina College, a Junior College under the University of Saskatchewan. With her came her six year old son, John, and her sister Jean Mooney, who joined the office staff, and in 1953 became the director of physical education at Alma.

Public Relations

Dr. Dobson made Alma known. Advertisements began to appear in papers and periodicals across Canada, in the United States, Mexico, Central America, South America. Contacts were revived with alumnae and friends around the world. A gentleman back from Europe and the Near East, related that to his amazement, when he said he was from Western Ontario, a voice would often exclaim: "That's where Alma College is!". Dr. Dobson next revitalized the alumnae branches. At every alumnae dinner he would eat some soup and a cracker and then seeming to lose interest in food, would stroll around from table to table, speaking to each one, recalling pranks and amusing anecdotes.



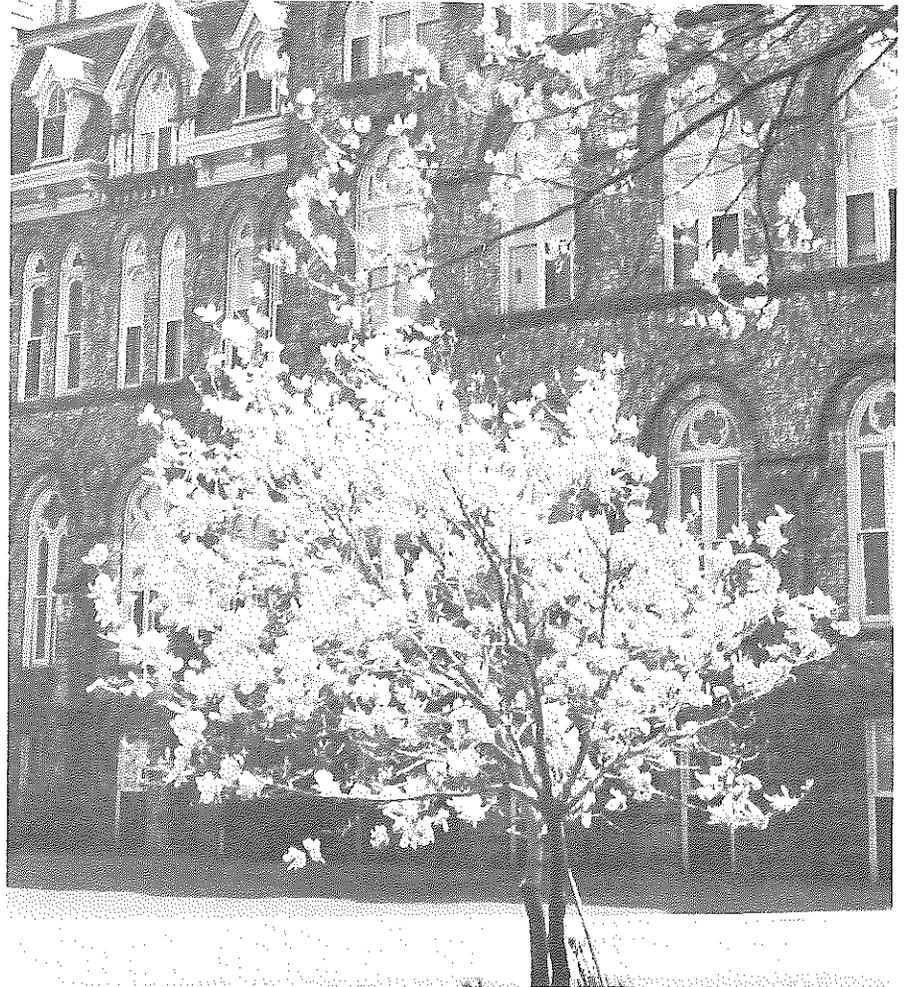
The Holly Hop



Dr. Dobson felt that it was important to invite St. Thomas to the College, sometimes for lunch — service clubs, church groups, the City and County Councils — to get to know them better and to let them learn first hand what Alma was like. Alma College was an important industry of St. Thomas. This was a good and unique plant. Moreover the 'raw material' (the students) did not have to be *purchased* . . . they *paid* to be *processed*. There was a good payroll, and most of the commodities needed to operate this plant — food, fuel, furnishings, supplies, clothing — were purchased locally. A substantial volume of funds flowed from the spending money of the students into the coffers of St. Thomas business firms. St. Thomas was well-known far beyond the borders of Ontario, or even Canada, as the site of Alma College.

When Dr. Dobson resigned the second time and Mrs. Sifton had succeeded him as principal, he had won another round for Alma. He had averted a threat of bankruptcy and had helped Alma in a difficult period, as he had helped many an individual student.

F. S.



The Graduates' Magnolia Tree