

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



Henry K. Ober (1878 - 1939)

A subdivision map made in 1909 identified the house of Henry K. Ober as between Hanover and Spruce Streets.¹ While being a teacher and business manager at Elizabethtown College, Henry K. Ober surveyed a tract of land that J. Harvey. Buch was planning to create a farm on. The tract began along College Avenue and Ober promptly created a plan for a subdivision with 440 building lots in addition to streets and alleys.²

On January 10, 1909, the new Christ Reformed Church was dedicated to divine worship and Rev. Henry K. Ober participated in the service.³ Ober succeeded Samuel Hertzler's position as "elder-in-charge" in 1930, also serving as a part-time pastor until his death in 1939. Ober was well-known as an educator, churchman, and a former president of Elizabethtown College. In April 1932, Ober ran in the Republican primary as a candidate for the State Senate. A month later Ober was supposedly called before the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren to request "forgiveness for allowing his name to be used in a recent election."⁴

History of Elizabethtown College information:

¹ Richard Kerwin MacMaster, *Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries* (Morgantown, PA: Mastof Press, 1999), 177.

² MacMaster, 178.

³ Ibid., 199.

⁴ Ibid.

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Through the years of 1903-1904, H.K. Ober was the Vice Principal and Teacher of Commercial Subjects and Mathematics. Through the years 1904-1905 and 1905-1907, Ober was Principal of the Commercial Department.⁵

At the beginning of 1902-1903, Ober joined the Elizabethtown College faculty to teach penmanship and commercial subjects. Following this, Ober was a student at the Millersville State Normal School and received a Bachelor Pedagogy degree in 1908. In his early years of teaching, Ober taught Pedagogy to students preparing to become teachers. After receiving his degree, Ober also received a Master of Science degree from Franklin and Marshall College and a Master of Arts degree from Columbia University. Serving a 2-year long term as Vice-President for the College, Ober was later elected as President on February 11, 1918.⁶

On March 15, 1904, three Elizabethtown College faculty members, one being H.K. Ober, submitted a proposal to the Board of Trustees about the college's management by an Administrative Committee of the faculty. Of this committee, Ober was set to be the Secretary and Treasurer.⁷ During the years of 1910-1918, Henry K. Ober was the Vice-president of Elizabethtown College.⁸ On July 22, 1913, a committee composed of H.K. Ober and a few others was formed to address a proposal regarding Elizabethtown College becoming the property of the church. The committee had a positive outlook on the College becoming church property: "First, We believe that the movement may be productive of much good to the church and to the College. Second, We recommend that the district consider this proposition for at least one year with the view of acquainting the people with the general educational movements in the Brotherhood, and with the proposition of Elizabethtown College, in particular."⁹ On



January 11, 1916, H.K. Ober was appointed to a committee of five with the goal "to outline a proposition to transfer the College to the state districts of Eastern and Southern Pennsylvania and to submit it to a later meeting of the Board." On February 16, 1916, the committee reported their draft of the transfer proposition to the Board of Trustees, which the board then voted to send to the upcoming District meetings.¹⁰ During the administration of D.C. Reber, bible institutes of one to two days were carried out in Eastern and Southern Pennsylvanian churches by H.K. Ober and other faculty. These bible institutes helped to unite the College and the church.¹¹

⁵ Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 45.; Jean-Paul Benowitz, Peter J. DePuydt, "Elizabethtown College" (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 36.

⁶ Schlosser, 48.; Danielle Hudicka, "Henry K. Ober," (Landmarks and Legends essay, Elizabethtown College, 2017) 2.

⁷ Ibid., 52.

⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁹ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰ Ibid., 69.

¹¹ Ibid., 74.

Due to an increase in students from farms, an attempt was made at Elizabethtown College to create an agricultural department, in which H.K. Ober took a personal interest. The Trustees actually voted to investigate the chicken business for the College and even created a poultry house. However, the project never necessarily took off and only three people completed any agricultural courses offered by the college.¹²

On July 29, 1915, the Board of Trustees voted for a motto to be placed in Alpha Hall and over the rostrum in the Chapel within Rider Memorial Hall. H.K. Ober and D.C. Reber created and implemented the mottos in the two halls. The motto selected for Rider Memorial Hall was “MAKE JESUS KING,” and it was placed on the arch above the pulpit of the hall. The second motto was written in chalk on the slate panel switchboard on the front wall of the College Chapel and read “EDUCATE FOR SERVICE.” A motto was never placed in Alpha Hall.¹³



The administration and early years of H.K. Ober, 1918-1928. With Reber accepting a professorship at another College, H.K. was unanimously elected as President of the College by the Board of Trustees on February 11, 1918. During the years of 1904-1911, Ober was simultaneously a Teacher, Acting Treasurer, and Business Manager of the College. During D.C. Reber's administration, Ober worked as the Vice President of the college and taught several courses such as biological science, agriculture, and surveying. In 1910, around the same time as his presidency at Elizabethtown College, Ober received the degree Master of pedagogy from Millersville State Normal School and a B.S. degree from Franklin and Marshall College. Ober requested a leave of absence on July 19, 1920, to take up more graduate study. Ober's request was granted for one to two years by the Board of Trustees. From 1920-1921 Ober did some teaching at Elizabethtown College while also doing work at Franklin and Marshall College. Additionally, Ober delivered speeches on *Orange Blossoms* and *Child Rights* within churches.¹⁴

In Ober's absence, J.G. Meyer was requested by the Board of Trustees to serve as the Chairman of the Faculty. When Ober resigned as President of Elizabethtown College on March 8, 1921, J.G. Meyer was also requested by the Board to take Ober's place on all the committees that he served on. The minutes of the Board state: “For the remainder of the school year 1920-1921 the administration of the College is to be in the hands of a committee of five members of the faculty. This arrangement is to be practically the same as obtained when H.K. Ober was in Japan on a leave of absence during the fall term.”¹⁵

¹² Ibid., 76.

¹³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵ Ibid., 89.

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H.K. Ober, Later Years, 1924-January 1, 1928: On January 26, 1924, H.K. Ober was once again elected by the Board of Trustees to be President of Elizabethtown College. However, on February 16, 1924, Ober declined the offer from the board. Despite this refusal, the Board of Trustees put together a committee of three to once again discuss the presidency with Ober. The committee seems to have been a success since on March 28, 1924, Ober accepted the position with the guarantee that a field man would be attained for the College and several other matters be adjusted. Next, Ober authorized to prepare a roster of teachers which would be presented at the next board meetings. H.K. Ober's second Presidency took place from 1924 to January 1, 1928. Due to health problems, President H.K. Ober asked for a leave of absence on February 1, 1927. However, on April 30, 1927, Ober reported to the board that he would continue the presidency with less of a teaching load.¹⁶ Despite this, Ober's failing health once again caused him to request for a leave of absence, writing a letter to the board on October 27, 1927, that "he be relieved from the presidency of the college at the earliest date possible with the least interruption to work." The Board of Trustees reluctantly accepted Ober's resignation, which began January 1, 1928. H.K. Ober received a degree from Columbia University in 1922 and was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. in which he essentially completed the residence requirements for his Ph.D. degree. Ober was honored by Franklin and Marshall College with the "Doctor of Divinity" honorary degree.¹⁷

Around 1919-1920 Elizabethtown College was having some issues securing credit from the State Department of Public Instruction for work done there. To become a standardized college there was a need for Elizabethtown College to secure credit and H.K. Ober wrote in Our College



Times in April, 1919, "If Elizabethtown College is to fulfill her large field of usefulness she will need to attain to the requirements set for a standard college. In order to build up a body of strong alumni who will fully regard this school as their Alma Mater, she must be a fully accredited college." H.K. was correct about needing credit for standardizing the college, and luckily the financial requirement

for accreditation was eventually met and on January 4, 1921, plans to proceed with standardizing the college were set in place.¹⁸

On July 17, 1919, The Board of Trustees created a committee to investigate the cost of a new building for the college, with H.K. Ober appointed as one of its members. The committee

¹⁶ Ibid., 90.

¹⁷ Ibid., 91.

¹⁸ Ibid., 100.

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presented their plan of an apartment building to the committee, which would come to be known as the Fairview Apartments.¹⁹

At the beginning of President H.K. Ober's Presidency, two literary societies were in place and known as the Keystone Literary Society and the Homeric Literary Society. Due to an influx of students, the Keystone Literary Society was split into two societies while the Homeric Literary Society was reorganized.²⁰ During Ober's administration, male and female quartets were also on the rise. These quartets would participate in the aforementioned literary societies, special college occasions, and programs related to civic clubs and church activities.²¹ The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the college's founding was on November 13 and 14 of 1925, and H.K. Ober closed the November 13th session by giving a presentation on the college's needs.²² November 14th was spent highlighting the theme of the college and the climax of the Anniversary Celebration came in the form of President H.K. Ober announcing upcoming projects such as the creation of a gymnasium, the Gible clan planning to erect a science hall, and the preservation of Elizabeth Myer's dorm room as a memorial to her.²³ On October 27, 1927, the Board of Trustees received a request from President Ober asking to resign due to ill health, which the board reluctantly accepted, therefore going into effect on January 1, 1928.²⁴ On March 17, 1926, the Chairman of Elizabethtown College for eighteen years, S.H. Hertzler, had passed away. Due to this, H.K. Ober was elected as the new Chairmen during the first board meeting of 1937.²⁵ H.K. Ober passed away on March 12, 1939 due to his failing health.²⁶ Because of Ober's failing health, he had requested that J.E. Trimmer (Vice Chairman) to attend at meetings of the board during Ober's last year of chairmanship, beginning on October 18, 1938.²⁷ At the time architecture was being drawn up for a new gymnasium, President H.K. Ober relived himself of his duties as Manager of the Auditorium-Gymnasium Campaign, and J.Z. Herr took his place on November 19, 1926.



Student Alumni Gymnasium Dedicated May 25, 1929.²⁸

On October 26, 1926, the Board of Trustees authorized the Gible clan, who held family reunions on the college campus, to form a committee with H.K. Ober and J.Z. Herr to create plans

¹⁹ Ibid., 106.

²⁰ Ibid., 108.

²¹ Ibid., 112.

²² Ibid., 114.

²³ Ibid., 116.

²⁴ Ibid., 121.

²⁵ Ibid., 126.

²⁶ Ibid., 127.

²⁷ Ibid., 127-128.

²⁸ Ibid., 152.

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for a Gible Science building.²⁹ Additionally, on April 17, 1935, the Board of Trustees discussed the need for new library facilities. The Trustees then appointed a committee of three, including H.K. Ober, which would cooperate with the Administrative Committee of the Faculty to determine the feasibility of creating a new library. However, a lack of funds halted the project until the next presidential administration of the college.³⁰ In May 1904, the second publication of Elizabethtown was a monthly known as *Our College Times*, and the first issue was mailed to former students and those related to the college. H.K. Ober was the Business Manager on the editorial staff for this publication.³¹ A friend and student of the college known as “Uncle Sam” died at the age of eighty-three on March 7, 1936, with H.K. Ober giving a memorial address in the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren.³²

On September 1, 1957, the Board of Trustees realized the necessity of a men’s dorm to hold one hundred and fifty men, then voted to apply for a loan from the Housing and Home Financial Agency of the Federal Government. The loan was granted at the rate of 3% interest. Plans were approved for the building, which would come to be known as Ober Hall, requiring a loan of \$700,000 and over 40 years to pay back.



Ober Hall

Dedicated October 15, 1960.³³

Ground was broke for Ober Hall on April 23, 1959, and the building was finished during the College year of 1959-1960. The cost of construction was estimated to be \$680,000, so the total amount for the loan from the Federal Government was reduced to \$675,000. As previously

²⁹ Ibid., 154.

³⁰ Ibid., 162.

³¹ Ibid., 166.

³² Ibid., 173.

³³ Ibid., 199.

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mentioned, Ober Hall was dedicated on October 15, 1960, and ceremonies were held in the Church of the Brethren on South Mount Joy Street. Of course, the building was named in honor of the previous President H.K. Ober and the building is an L shaped, three story, brick structure of colonial architectural design. The building houses two wings being 149 and 161 feet long with a lounge at the junction of the two wings. Due to Ober Hall's creation, many more students who were previously housed in private homes within Elizabethtown Borough were able to room directly on campus.

In memory of Henry K. Ober (background information)

Henry K. Ober, 1878,1939.

Henry K. Ober was a churchman and educator, born near Manheim Pennsylvania in 1878. During the early years of his life, Ober spent his time on a farming, which is something that greatly interested him. In 1899, H.K. Ober was ordained to the church and married to his wife, Cora Hess. Ober had four children with Cora Hess, two boys and two girls, with one son unfortunately dying at 2 months old and the other dying in 1926. Stanley, the second son of Ober who, was a mature man with great promise for the future, and his death supposedly marked the start of Ober's declining health. Ober's daughters are Mrs. Paul M. Grubb and Mrs. James M. Miller. H.K. Ober taught in a rural school in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and to further his education beyond public school, he attended Millersville State Normal School and received a B. Pd. Degree in 1908, in addition to an M.Pd. Degree in 1911. Next, Ober attended Franklin and Marshall College in 1918, receiving a B. S. degree in 1918, and then attended Columbia University and received a M. A. degree in 1922. Through his attendance in special sessions at the University of Pennsylvania, Ober had completed all his residence requirements for a Ph.D. degree. H.K. Ober's name first appears in reference to Elizabethtown College on the Faculty roster as a teacher for Penmanship, Bookkeeping, and Arithmetic.³⁴ Up until his death in 1939, Ober had essentially maintained continual service in



³⁴ Ibid., 223.

Elizabethtown College as a teacher and president.³⁵ Through 1904-1911, Ober also served as the Treasurer and Business Manager for Elizabethtown College. From 1918-1921 Ober served as the President of the college, and then again in 1924 to January 1, 1928. From 1930-1936 Ober served as Secretary of the Board of Trustees and was elected Chairman of the Board from 1936, 1939. Additionally, H.K. Ober was ordained into the Christian Ministry in 1915 and served as a pastor to the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren from 1928 to 1939. For twenty-one years Ober served as President of the Lancaster County Sunday School Association and served a term as Vice President of the Pennsylvanian Sunday School Association. Over the years, H.K. Ober was called to several committees and boards by the District of Eastern Pennsylvania. For twenty-eight years Ober was also a member of the General Board of Christian Education of the Church of the Brethren. During 1929 Ober was the Moderator of the General Conference of the Church of the Brethren at North Manchester, Indiana. Ober also partook in a club known as the Elizabethtown Rotary Club. Ober was known as a surveyor, a justice of the peace, an associate in a manufacturing concern, and a man with great interest in the civic life of the community. Throughout his teaching career, Ober published several books such as *Principles of Education*, *Child Rights*, *Orange Blossoms*, and *Training the Sunday School Teacher*.

The personality of H.K. Ober was aptly described in the *History of the Church of the Brethren of Eastern Pennsylvania*, 1915-1965, page 226: "Brother Ober was blessed with the ability of mingling and identifying with people. His concern for the welfare of others knew almost no limits and his fatherly love and sacrifice left behind impressions which will not be erased... He knew that to identify with people, particularly young people, required that he become one of them. And how he loved young people! He loved to be in their lively meetings to address them. His youth lectures were often spiced with vivid illustrations, and on many occasions he would quicken the interest of his audience with his quaint Pennsylvania Dutch expressions. He was an excellent lecturer, always fast moving, always pleasant... In his lecture, *Child Rights*, intended especially for young parents, eternal truths were conveyed to the hearers through well told stories. If a hearer forgot the principle, he could readily reconstruct it because he could never forget the stories."³⁶

Additionally, the Faculty and students of Elizabethtown College paid a sympathetic tribute to Ober and his family in *The Etownian* of March 24, 1937: "We, the faculty and students of the College, hereby record our deep appreciation of Dr. Ober's fatherly love and concern for each member of the College family. We recall with gratitude his sincere efforts to uphold the Word of God, Christian standards of living, and fellowship in service. His earnest counsel and prayers remain in our hearts as a benediction. His life was truly given to his Master as a living sacrifice." H.K. Ober died on March 12, 1939, and fifteen hundred people attended his funeral service, held in the Church of the Brethren. Additionally, an overflow service was held in the Church of God for Ober.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 223-224.

³⁶ Ibid., 224.

³⁷ Ibid., 225.

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In the absence of President H.K. Ober and Vice President R.W. Schlosser, Jacob G. Meyer was elected as Chairman of the Elizabethtown College Faculty on August 22, 1920, and then became the President of Elizabethtown College on March 22, 1921, until 1924.³⁸

Uniting Work and Spirit INFORMATION:

H.K. Ober served as Vice-Principal of Elizabethtown College during the 1903-1904 school year while Reber served as Principal.³⁹ H.K. Ober also served as Reber's Vice President when he became Elizabethtown College's President in the 1910-11 school year.⁴⁰ In 1910, Vice President Ober took charge of an agricultural program and course that was added due to the fact that many students came from farming families. Unfortunately, the program was disbanded despite its shown profitability due to the main issue of not having enough students signed up for the course.⁴¹ The influence of the church on Elizabethtown College is clear from the mottos selected by H.K. Ober and D.C. Reber. One was "MAKE JESUS KING" while the other is still around even today, "EDUCATE FOR SERVICE."⁴²

When D.C. Reber accepted a teaching position at Manchester College in Indiana, Henry Kulp Ober was one of the first choices since he had served as Reber's Vice President for many years. In the "horse and buggy days" of the college as described by Ober, both men took part in soliciting money for the college and spread word of it. Apparently, the bay horse that pulled H.K. Ober's buggy was well known to the Church of the Brethren in various areas due to their travelling.⁴³ According to statements from those who personally knew H.K. Ober, he was an energetic, enthusiastic, and sincere man. His energetic nature could be seen from the sort of "half-run" walk that he typically had. Additionally, Ober's personality is described as "magnetic" and was described in the *History of the Church of The Brethren, Eastern Pennsylvania* (1915-1965): "In his sermons, his stories, and his manner of speaking and gesturing opened a crescendo which could best be described as having a heavenly ring which hearers could not forget."⁴⁴ Though, as acting treasurer and business manager of Elizabethtown College during the years of 1904-1911, Ober also had the ability to be a shrewd businessman. H.K. Ober was successful in the early campaigns for the college, soliciting funds, and in his personal business matters.

Ober was born to a Pennsylvania German family described as "thrifty," on January 2, 1878, near Elizabethtown and stayed there for all his life. Though, Ober did travel much of the world, ranging as far as Japan. Ober received degrees from three different universities, the Millersville State Normal School, Franklin & Marshall College, and Columbia. Initially, Ober started his teaching profession in rural schools, then coming to Elizabethtown College in 1902 to teach and stayed at the college for most of his life. H.K. Ober became the President of Elizabethtown College at two points in his life, 1918-1921 and 1924-1928, putting all his efforts to turn the new college

³⁸ Ibid., 23.

³⁹ Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 47.

⁴⁰ Williamson, 63.

⁴¹ Ibid., 68.

⁴² Ibid., 74-75.

⁴³ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 84-85.

into a fully-fledged one. Ober was focused on furthering the field of science at Elizabethtown College but was even more so set on getting the college accredited through acquiring funding for the college's buildings and just in general. Accreditation of the college was essential, because as it currently was at the time of Ober's presidency, students could not receive baccalaureate degrees. While they could receive diplomas, students had to transfer their credits to a college with academic standardization and then take the required number of courses to receive a baccalaureate degree. The faculty finally requested for the standardization of the college in January of 1919, to which the Board of Trustees approved, though the main challenge would be acquiring funding as a "standard" college must have a total of \$500,000 in property. Additionally, a standardized college must have six full time professors, though Etown had twice as many.⁴⁵ With the college only being twenty years old, it was far from its goal of having \$500,000 in buildings, equipment, or endowment. For this reason, an endowment fund of \$250,000 started to be raised, deciding then to spend that money (when raised) on first building a science hall and women's dormitory. Articles started being written in Elizabethtown College's *Our College Times* as to why funds were being raised, with the most detailed explanation and reasons being listed in Henry Ober's "Why Elizabethtown College Should Have an Endowment Fund" (April 1919).⁴⁶ The endowment Campaign was successful, and Ober continued the campaign as President when D.C. Reber stepped down in 1918, with students in the class of 1922 finally benefitting from the standardization of the college. However, two and half years after taking his presidency, Ober requested a leave of absence to earn an A. M. degree from Columbia university and while on a trip to the World Sunday School in Japan, the Board of Trustees replaced Ober with J.G. Meyer. Elizabethtown College had J.G Meyer as its President for three years before Ober took up the position once more.⁴⁷

While Ober was away from Elizabethtown College, he received his A. M. degree from the University of Columbia in 1922 and completed his residence requirements for his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. The timing of the completion of Ober's work was auspicious because in the same year he completed his residence requirements, J.G Meyer submitted his resignation to the Board of Trustees. Due to this timing, the Board of Trustees looked to H.K. Ober to once again become President of Elizabethtown College and was elected on January 26, 1924. Despite this election, Ober initially denied the position until three Trustees privately met with him and found that certain requirements needed to be made for Ober to accept. For one, Ober required a "field man" to be hired who would go out and recruit students for the college.⁴⁸ Additionally, Ober necessitated accounts be audited by the CPA, the creation of an annual budget of expenses, a plan for relieving dissatisfied pledgers of the college, and "an effort be made to clean up the current indebtedness [of \$3,700]."⁴⁹ With these guarantees, H.K. Ober accepted the position and once again became President of Elizabethtown College at the March 28th board meeting. Unfortunately, the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 96-97.

start of Ober's presidency was a dreary one, as two months after he accepted the position, the only member left of Etown's original six Faculty, Elizabeth Meyer, passed away.⁵⁰ Ober's Presidency of Elizabethtown College continued to be a depressing one due to his son, Stanley, passing away on April 12, 1926. Several months later, Ober requested to be relieved from his duty as the official manager of the Auditorium-Gymnasium Campaign, which in hindsight seemed to be a precursor to President Ober's inevitable resignation. Ober and many other parents throughout his generation lost their children, and he was no stranger to it, as he had lost his ten-month-old son Henry several months before. Despite this fact, Stanley's death was much more of a crushing emotional weight since he was an adult with much talent and promise, graduating from Elizabethtown College's pedagogical course and even being ordained as a Minister for the Church of the Brethren in 1922. For Stanley Ober's senior year, he had attended Juniata College and graduated in 1924, then going on to do postgraduate work at Columbia University.⁵¹ Columbia University was the very same college Henry Ober had received his master's degree from. Stanley had even become a Principal at Salisbury High School when he was stricken with appendicitis. Unfortunately, the appendicitis attack was fatal and caused Stanley to pass away. Stanley's unfortunate and untimely death was especially felt by the Ober family, students at Elizabethtown College who knew him, and students from Salisbury High School. Fifteen hundred people ended up attending his funeral service. The death of Henry Ober's son was an extreme blow to his mental health and as described in the *History of the Church of The Brethren, Eastern Pennsylvania* (1915-1965), was "a blow so shattering that he never became his formed self, and hence that date marks the beginning of his declining health and vigor." Additionally, this book described the relationship between Ober and his wife: "...for all the years of his life [she] was his beloved. He rarely referred to her as simply his wife; she was his girl friend, his queen, or whatever endearing name his fertile mind could create appropriate to the occasion." Despite this connection between Ober and his wife, their bond unfortunately could not stop Ober's mental decline.⁵² While Ober's health was on the decline, he continued his Presidency for Elizabethtown College. During the Chapel exercises on January 1927, Ober showed up the rough drawings of the Gymnasium that were currently underway, to which the students expressed their approval and appreciation with a resounding applause "that surely could have been heard around the entire town."⁵³

During the roaring twenties, students of Elizabethtown College had become much more vocally rebellious and frequently "bashed" the administration through several editorials, especially in 1928. At the very least, H.K. Ober avoided dealing with these issues as he requested to resign as Etown's President on October 27, 1927, to which the Board of Trustees reluctantly accepted. S.H. Hertzler, the board president, claimed that Ober's resignation "...was accepted only after hearing the one compelling reason, the physical condition of President Ober. Next to the members of the faculty probably no one knows better than the trustees what a nerve strain it must be to administer the affairs of a college. To bear up under the daily grind of the routine work in addition

⁵⁰ Ibid., 97.

⁵¹ Ibid., 98.

⁵² Ibid., 99.

⁵³ Ibid., 100.

to the financial embarrassment due to a constantly threatening deficit in the current expenses as well as an assured deficit due to needed repairs and improvements, many of which demand prompt solution, besides harmonizing the divergent views of the State of Standards and the constituency, to say nothing of the student's appeals for their needs, many of which he had in his power to do so, requires not only rare skill but also a good strong health body and practically unlimited energy."⁵⁴ From this point, Henry Ober continued living for little over a decade until his death in 1939 at age sixty-one. During this time, Ober continued being active in his church conference work and became a pastor at the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren in 1928. From 1930-1936, H.K. Ober returned to Elizabethtown College as secretary of the Board of Trustees and then became chairman of the board, which he stayed up until his passing. With over two thousand people attending Ober's funeral service, it is clear he was both loved and respected by the communities he found himself in. In the *1915-1936 History of the Church of the Brethren*, the characteristics of Ober that made him well received by students were described: "How he loved young people! He loved to be in their lively meetings... His expression was a lusty, 'Denksht du?', and after an illustration of a grave subject he would exclaim, 'Yammer nock amohl.' ...He urged young men to show appreciation and love for their wives. Often he would end his injunction by saying, 'If you love her, tell her so, out loud.' ...He knew that to identify with people, particularly young people, required that he became one of them."

Ober particularly identified with a young man named Ralph Schlosser, who was a nine-teen year old student in English scientific and pedagogical courses at the time Ober was teaching in 1905.⁵⁵

At the time of Henry Ober's resignation as Elizabethtown's President, Schlosser was elected as President. Funnily enough, Schlosser put in place the same condition that Ober once had, requiring a fieldman be hired to recruit students if he were to accept the position.⁵⁶

Around 1927-28 there was a meeting for the College Athletic Association and William Sweitzer, the association's president, spoke in support of Football. Ober assured the students comprising this association that he would bring the matter to the attention of the Board of Trustees, however, trustees rejected Football as a brutal and dangerous sport.⁵⁷

During the twenties, students could pay \$1.00 to \$1.50 in order to see speakers and performers, such as the "wildly popular" poet Edgar Guest, who was a friend of H.K. Ober.⁵⁸

At a Trustee Board meeting on April 17, 1935, a committee of three was appointed, including H.K. Ober, to consider the possibility of building a new library facility. However, it was clear the funds necessary for the construction could not be feasibly attained, therefore a new library could not be constructed at the time.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 111.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 116-117.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 131.

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2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP
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Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

H.K. Ober was only chairman of the Board of Trustees for three years before being succeeded by Samuel Hertzler and then eventually passing away on March 12, 1939, at sixty-one years old.⁶⁰



“The College faculty in 1924. Notables include Elizabeth Myer and five presidents. Henry Ober, Ralph Schlosser, A. C. Baugher, J. G. Meyer, and Harry Nye.”⁶¹

The last building created in the 1950’s of Etown’s history was a mens dormitory and was a necessity for housing students on campus. A loan of \$650,000 was acquired for this building and when finished would house 232 alumni. The building was constructed in 1959-60 and was dedicated on October 15, 1960, taking only seven months to receive the name of “Ober Hall” in honor of H.K. Ober, who was once president of the college. Ober hall was comprised of two adjacent three-story buildings joined by a large lounge at the junction of the wings.⁶²

Chairs of the Board of Trustees: Henry K. Ober, 1936-39. College Principals and Presidents: Henry K. Ober, 1918-21, 1924-28.⁶³

Find a grave Information:

Find a Grave, database and images (https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/195501931/henry_k-ober: accessed June 4, 2024), memorial page for Henry K. Ober (2 Jan 1878–12 Mar 1939), Find a Grave Memorial ID 195501931, citing Mount Tunnel Cemetery, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, USA; Maintained by Etta Lyons Buchwald (contributor 48374005).

Henry Kulp Ober

BIRTH: 2 Jan 1878

DEATH: 12 Mar 1939 (aged 61)

⁶⁰ Ibid., 133.

⁶¹ Ibid., 178.

⁶² Ibid., 190.

⁶³ Ibid., 341.

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BURIAL: Mount Tunnel Cemetery Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, USA
MEMORIAL ID: 195501931

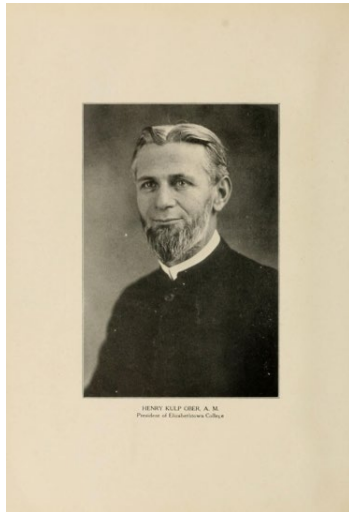
Parents: Michael Ruhl Ober 1836–1913 & Susan Baker Kulp Ober 1851–1930

Spouse: Cora B. Hess Ober 1879–1966

Siblings: Emma O Ober Wolgemuth 1879–1961

Half Siblings: Matilda Spickler Ober Brubaker 1858–1934, Phares S. Ober 1860–1903, Harrison S Ober 1862–1914 & Allen S Ober 1865–1944

Children: Stanley H Ober 1902–1926, Grace H Ober Grubb 1904–1977, Ruth Ober Miller 1906–2004 & Henry H. Ober 1913–1914



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