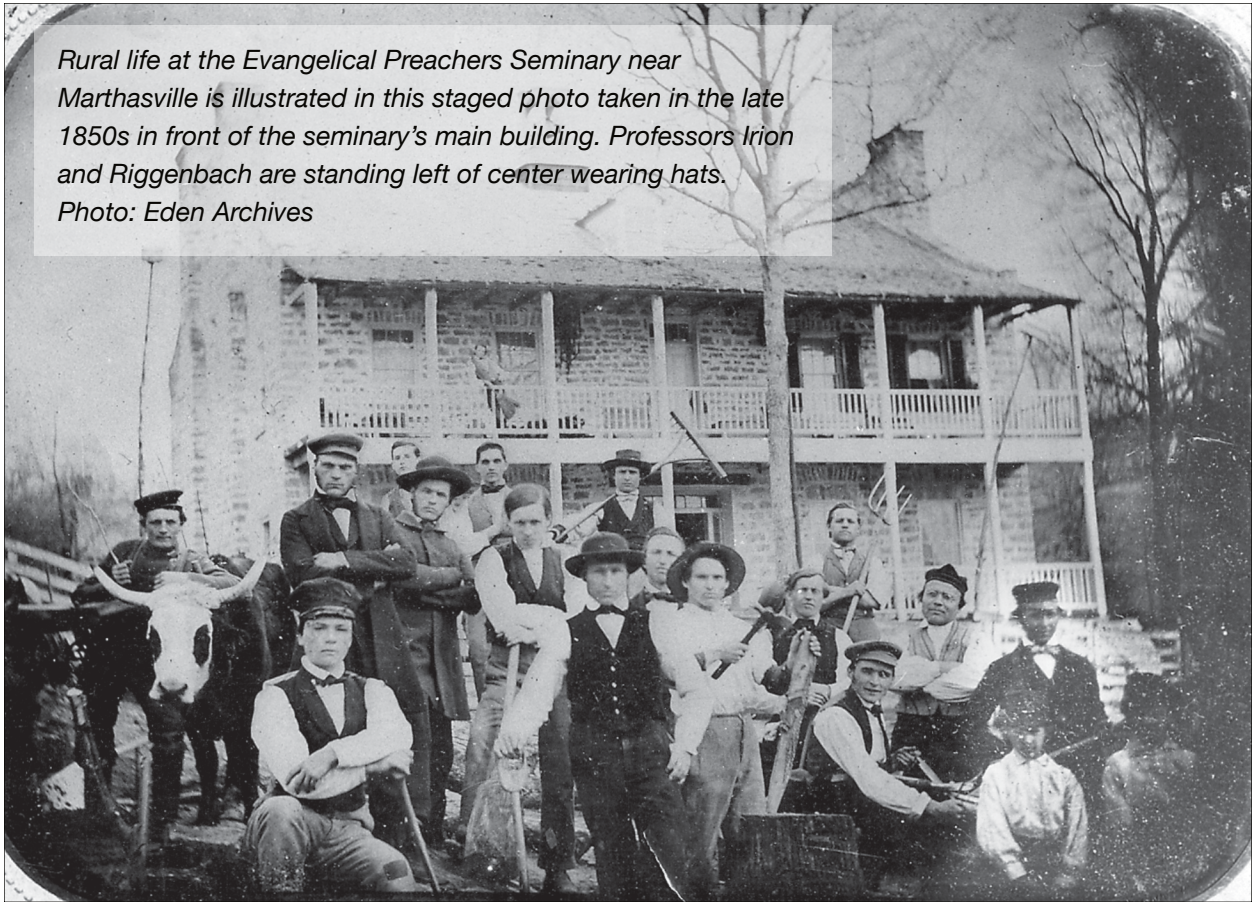


This Week in Eden History
June 20 | Opening of Evangelical Preachers Seminary

Rural life at the Evangelical Preachers Seminary near Marthasville is illustrated in this staged photo taken in the late 1850s in front of the seminary's main building. Professors Irion and Riggenbach are standing left of center wearing hats. Photo: Eden Archives



The **Evangelical Preachers Seminary**, Eden Theological Seminary's first predecessor, opened in Marthasville, Missouri on **June 20, 1850** with six students. The school was founded to prepare ministers to serve the growing number of German-immigrant congregations on what was then the western frontier. Its location, a wooded valley near Marthasville, Missouri and 54 miles west of St. Louis, was removed from the unhealthy conditions associated with St. Louis. Most of the early students, who came from



Eden students Nathan Kaplan and Edvonia Scott and Eden graduate Julie Kies glean sweet corn fields near Vincennes, Indiana. Photo courtesy Kristen Lelie

agricultural areas and were preparing to serve mostly rural congregations, would have found the surroundings familiar. Students were required to join with the instructors and small staff to cut firewood, tend animals, assist in construction, and work the fields. One early professor suggested that a student's willingness to do hard physical labor was a good indicator of success in their future ministry.

Although no longer located among farm fields, Eden Sem-

inary's connection to and concern for rural communities continues today. In 2019, Student Karen Pepmeier, now pastor of St. John's UCC, Cahokia, Indiana, began exploring with Eden faculty member Kristen Leslie how she could help connect local farmers with food ministries in St. Louis. Her home church arranged to bring volunteers from Eden to glean corn and potatoes after the fields were harvested. In total approximately 10,000 pounds of produce were distributed to St. Louis food ministries last season. Beyond the work of the gleaning crews, the ongoing project's goals are ending hunger, shrinking food waste, and connecting communities.