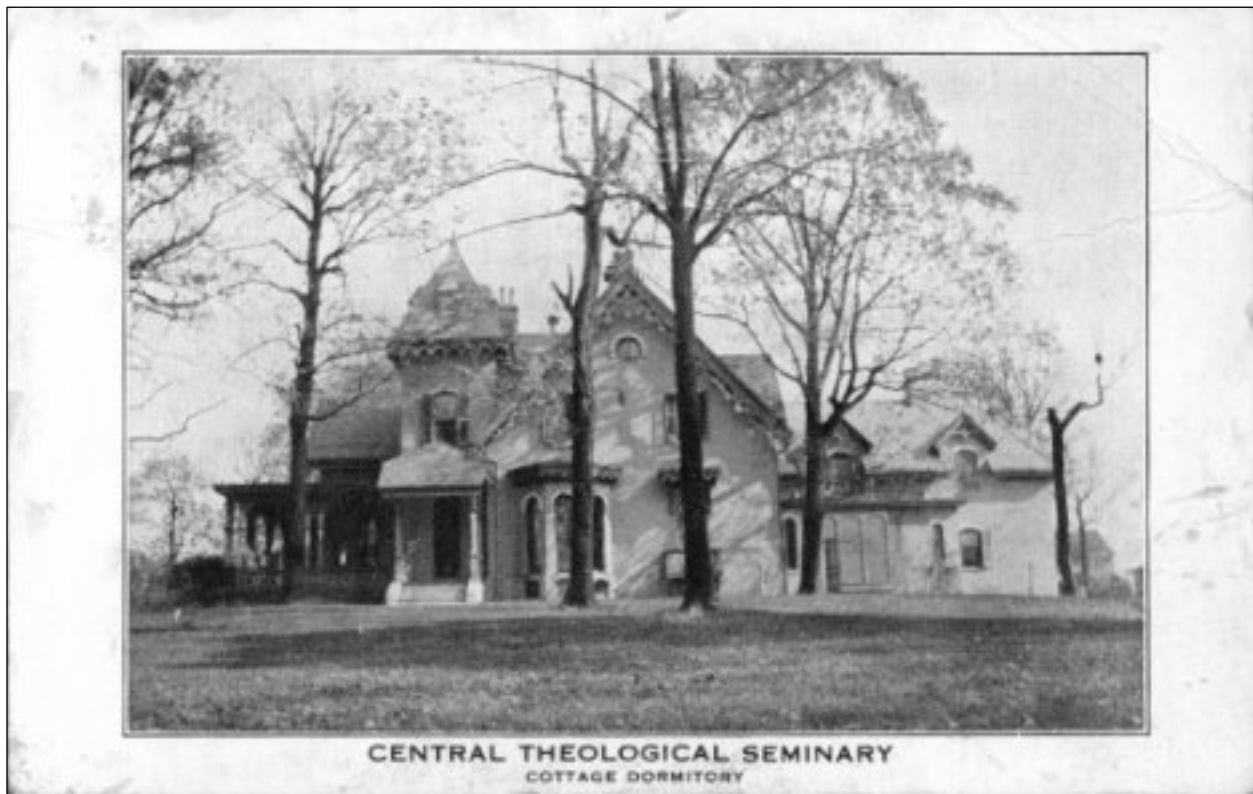


This Week in Eden History
September 20 | Merger of Central Theological Seminary with Eden



Merger of Central Theological Seminary with Eden, September 1934. Central, a seminary of the Reformed Church in the U.S. in Dayton, Ohio, was itself the product of the merger of Ursinus Theological Seminary and Heidelberg Seminary in 1907. Finding itself under financial pressure, the institution entered into merger negotiations with several other institutions before consolidating with Eden. The eminent merger of the Reformed Church and the Evangelical Synod of North America was an additional contributing factor.

Three individuals from Central joined the Eden faculty under the agreement. Dr. Henry J. Christman was elected Professor of Practical Theology at Heidelberg Theological Seminary in 1902, continuing after its merger into Central in 1907. In 1912, he became President of Central and played a prominent role in shaping the merger with Eden. He served as Professor of Practical Theology at Eden until retirement in 1938. Dr. Herbert H. Wernecke taught Church History at Central beginning in 1927 and was professor of New Testament and Librarian of the Good Collection from 1934 until his retirement in 1961. Dr. F. W. Leich was elected to the Chair of Systematic Theology at Central in 1922. Unfortunately, Dr. Leich died in August 1935, only one year after his arrival in Webster Groves. Purd E. Dietz was elected to the Eden faculty in 1938 to replace Dr. Christman in Practical Theology, serving until his retirement in 1950.

Three representatives of Central were initially appointed to the Eden Board of Directors under the agreement: Dr. L. W. Stolte, Prof. F. W. Kennedy (Dean of Heidelberg College), and the Rev. J. P. Alden. The Ohio Synod of the Reformed Church elected a member to the Eden Board each year afterwards until 1940, when the General Synod of the Evangelical & Reformed Church began appointing board members according to its new constitution.

The James I. Good Library of Reformation History also came to Eden through the merger. Works include early and rare publications by Zwingli, Bullinger, Bucer, Ursinus, and other reformers, as well as books and manuscripts pertaining to history of the Reformed Church in Europe and the U.S. Dr. Good collected these items during his teaching career and donated them to Central Seminary after his retirement.

In his history of Eden Seminary*, former professor Walter Brueggemann stated, "This merger, achieved in generosity and largeness of spirit, embodied Eden's serious commitment to ecumenism in that period."

*Walter Brueggemann. *Ethics & Ecumenism, An Evangelical Blend: A History of Eden Theological Seminary, 1925–1975*. St. Louis: Eden Publishing House, 1975.