

**Gettysburg College**  
**Musselman Library, Special Collections**  
**Records Management Program**

**Record Group:** RG 2.0.5 Office of the President  
**Office:** President Samuel Gring Hefelbower

**Biography:**

Samuel Gring Hefelbower (1871-1950) served as the fifth president of Pennsylvania College at Gettysburg for nearly six years from fall 1904 until the end of the 1909-1910 academic year.

A native of Newville, Pennsylvania, he graduated from the College with the class of 1891, completed his work at the Lutheran Seminary, and was ordained in 1894. He spent one and one-half years in graduate study at the University of Leipzig, five years serving two parishes in Pennsylvania and Maryland, and then returned to Germany for additional study in theology, philosophy and history at Leipzig and at the University of Halle.

During a brief interruption in his studies, he was prevailed upon in 1902 to join the college faculty as Professor of German and Instructor in French and History. One of his students, Joseph E. Rowe of the class of 1904 praised him as “a young, energetic, progressive teacher who engaged the attention of students.” These attributes attracted the attention of the members of the Board of Trustees who in 1904, after two previous failed attempts to agree on a candidate, elected him to the presidency of the College. It was a surprise selection to many and especially to Hefelbower. After some thought, he accepted this appointment and entered upon his duties to improve the standing of the College in at least three important areas: (1) to increase the requirements for admission and thus the academic preparation of entering students; (2) to expand and increase the rigor of the curriculum by adding course work in philosophy, psychology and additional courses in French, Modern European History and Physics, adding a laboratory component for the first time in that subject area; and (3) to increase the size of the faculty with new appointments required to be “university trained” in the areas of instruction. In this regard, his administration served as a transition, directly confronting some of the changes occurring in American higher education of the day.

Although these changes were approved by the Board, they were not met with universal acceptance by all constituents of the College. Continuing controversies coupled with the administration’s failure to attract significant gift support for the institution created some discontent from alumni and other friends of the College. In response, Hefelbower requested that the Board appoint a committee to conduct a full investigation of “existing condition” and to make recommendation to deal with the areas of discontent. After the trustees considered and adopted the committee’s generally favorable report, Hefelbower presented his resignation, feeling that he had succeeded in moving the college to a stronger position academically.

After leaving the presidency, Hefelbower studied at Princeton and Harvard, and served as a professor of philosophy at Washburn College (1914-1920), Carthage College (1920-1936) and

Wagner College (1936-1947). He remained an active member of the Board of Trustees of Gettysburg College and was selected by the Board to write a history of the college for the 1932 centennial celebration of its founding.

### **Scope and Content Notes:**

Unfortunately, the official papers of President Hefelbower were destroyed during a flooding of the basement of Pennsylvania Hall where they had been stored. This collection contains only bits and pieces of material, collected over time in a vertical file folder housed in Special Collections, only a few originating from his years as president. It does contain a copy of the statement from Hefelbower to the committee appointed by the Board of Trustees in 1909, at his request, to investigate his administration. In this statement he summarizes, in some detail, his accomplishments as president. There is also a series of correspondences at the time of his research for the college history in 1932 in which he supports his belief that Pennsylvania College at Gettysburg was the first institution of higher education in the United States to offer a course in meteorology.

### **Container List Box 1 of 1**

1-1 Copy of Finding Aid

1-2 Photograph Rev. S.G. Hefelbower, D.D. President of College  
Obituary "Gettysburg College Bulletin", October, 1950

1-3 Correspondence while President

- From Hefelbower to Our Alumni, June 23, 1906 Announcing recent actions of the Board, adding instructors in Physics and French and a replacement instructor in Psychology and Ethics, raising the tuition fee to \$75 per year, raising entrance requirements, establishing a fund campaign to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of founding. TLS 1p (4 copies)
- From E.R. Parkin to President Hefelbower, February, 1909 Announcing a small change to the eligibility requirements for Rhodes Scholarships TLS 3p

1-4 Statement from Hefelbower to The Committee on Investigation of the Board of Trustees, October 8, 1909 reviewing the improvements, changes and continuing problems during his administration of the College D 10pp

1-5 Baccalaureate Sermon to the Class of 1910 D 24pp. (2 copies)

1-6 Hefelbower signature on a brochure "Pennsylvania College and the Lutheran Church"  
Published by authority of the Board of Trustees, 1879

1-7 Correspondence on the early teaching of meteorology fall 1929 in preparation for the writing of a history of Gettysburg College

- From D.E. Thomas, Acting Chief Clerk, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education to President Henry W.A. Hanson, September 11, 1929 Suggesting that Rensselaer

Polytechnic Institute and Hobart College as places where meteorology was taught at a very early date TLS 1p

- From Hefelbower to President Henry A.W. Hanson, September 25, 1929 Suggesting that Professor Jacobs at Pennsylvania College may have been the first to offer a college level course in meteorology, other personal matters ALS 1p
- From Palmer C. Ricketts, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to Professor Hefelbower, Carthage, September 30, 1929 Illinois Reporting that meteorology was taught at Rensselaer in 1832 T LS 1p
- From George A. Roberts, Assistant to the President at Hobart College to Professor Hefelbower, October 6, 1929 Reporting the first mention of a course in meteorology at Hobart was in the year 1869-70 TL 1p
- From Hefelbower to President Hanson, October 16, 1929 Confirming his belief that Jacobs did indeed offer the first American college course in meteorology, other miscellaneous matters regarding the writing of the History of Gettysburg College TLS 1p

1-8 Published paper by Doctor Samuel Gring Hefelbower, “The Place of Scholarship in Ministerial Training”, *Carthage College Bulletin* Vol VI No 18 March 1922 (3 copies)

1-9 Hefelbower The Bell Lecture 1933 “The New Paganism”

1-10 Miscellaneous later correspondence

### **For more information about Samuel Gring Hefelbower**

Glatfelter, Charles H.; A Salutory Influence: Gettysburg College 1832-1985

MS – 055 The Papers of the German Literary Society

RG 2.0.7 Office of the President, Henry W.A. Hanson

### **Writings of Samuel Gring Hefelbower**

Hefelbower, Samuel G.; The History of Gettysburg College 1832-1932

Hefelbower, Samuel G.; The Relation of John Locke to English Deism

Hefelbower, Samuel G.; “Religious Education in the Programs of our Colleges and Seminaries”  
Special Collections Pamphlet

Hefelbower, Samuel G.; “Professor James William Richard” Special Collection

Prepared by Ronald Couchman Fall, 2011