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Dedication Address of New Public Building, 1882

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**Address given at the dedication of the new public school building in Orange City
By Henry Hospers**

Translated from the Dutch by Nelson Nieuwenhuis, April 1971
Address appeared in the January 26, 1882 issue of the *Sioux County Herald*

Mr. Henry Hospers, on being called upon to address the audience at the dedication of the new school house last Monday evening, after a few remarks in regard to not being a public speaker but that he always tried to comply with the requests of friends, read the following words:

LAIDES AND GENTLEMEN: Imagine yourselves, a little over twelve years ago, standing on the place upon which this school building has been erected. Wheresoever your eye wandered only the clear skies and the prairie, bounded alone by the horizon, met your gaze. No dwellings, no trees, no human beings, except the prairie squirrel and a few birds so tame that they perched on your head, were to be seen.

This was the place for centuries destined for our homes by the Creator of the universe. And while you gaze in solemn wonder at the indescribable beauties of nature, behold! A white object appears on the southern horizon; it moves slowly, but sure – small black figures move about, and come nearer and nearer. What are they? A covered wagon crawling over the roadless prairie; five men wading ahead of the team, guiding their way with a surveyor's compass. Observe how they look all around, measure their distances; how eagerly they converse, and how satisfied they appear. No wonder! It is a committee sent out by mother Pella to hunt up a place where her children can find homes, and "EUREKA!" they have found it on these broad, fertile prairies.

They return home, carry the glad news to their friends, and early the following year more than fifty families settled around this spot, and changed these prairies into beautiful farms.

Their small dwellings houses were hardly erected, their sod houses but just dug out, when at once they build the school house that is to give way for the new one we are now dedicating.

When I passed that old school house, coming to this meeting tonight, I could not help stopping; I looked at it; a feeling crept over me, as when one takes a last farewell of an old, dear friend. There it stands; that dear, old school house, overpowered, driven away by this young Dutch-America! That dear old school house! How many tender recollections cluster around it! During our struggles in settling this colony, when misfortunes almost overpowered us, when unexpected disasters bled our hearts, when it seemed as if our bright expectations were about to be crushed—how many times did we then meet in that building as our only place of worship. And within its walls, when we listened to those inspiring words, coming from the lips of that old servant of God, Rev. S. Bolks; when we mingled our prayers with the earnest supplications of that true friend of our colony, how much were our hopes revived and our trust centered in our covenant God, who helped us through, and to whom alone, be ascribed all our thanks and praises.

As other gentlemen will speak about education, and apply their eloquent talents more particularly to the dedication of this new building, I will close by dropping a tear for the old school house. The dear old school house, soon to leave the place where it was reared, is now the property of our enterprising merchant, G. Rozenboom. I hope its walls, in its declining years, may be spared to listen to the grunt of the hog, or the pompous arguments used in horse trades.

And now we are assembled together to dedicate this magnificent building to school purposes. It stands here, an honor to our town; with pride can we point it out to strangers visiting us, and in language stronger than words, it proclaims that we are a people, who take a deep interest in education.

And I may properly state here, that no interest bearing bonds or warrants disgrace this building. Although the necessary amount was not all in the schoolhouse fund, all is paid for, by borrowing it from another fund belonging to this district which had a surplus that was not needed until the April draw was received.

Our thanks are due the Board of Directors of this district, for their actions, perseverance, wise and liberal deliberation, in furnishing our town this elegant schoolhouse.

Much credit is due the contractors, A. & H.J. Lenderink, for the prompt and honest fulfilling of the contract. Experts declare that seldom have they seen a public building so well finished and substantially built. I hope we will not stop here, but the grounds be enclosed with a tasty fence, laid out as a park, and planted with a beautiful grove.

But our task has just commenced; this is only the foundation of the great work we have upon our hands, for the education of our children.

Before many years roll around, I hope we will be called again, to dedicate one of the best college buildings in the state, within a block or two from here.