

OLD FARM CHANGED INTO ARTS COLLEGE

Marlboro Campus, in Vermont, Was Group of Abandoned Barns Only 2 Years Ago

By **BENJAMIN FINE**
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MARLBORO, Vt., June 12—An old New England farm on a wooded hilltop in Southern Vermont has been transformed, in the space of two years, into a flourishing liberal arts college.

With the aid of the 100 students and thirteen faculty members, the century-old buildings have been remodeled, making them attractive college quarters. The abandoned cow barn is now a comfortable dining hall, the old tool shed has become the creative arts building, the horse barn is now an up-to-date library, and the 150-year-old farmhouse itself is an attractive dormitory with lounge room and infirmary.

When this writer visited the Marlboro College campus—a broad tract of spruce pine and maple through which deer roam unafraid—the students were hard at work renovating an old barn. Before classes start in September the barn will have become an adequate science hall. It will contain three chemistry laboratories and a dozen or so classrooms.

The Project Sets a Mark

It is doubtful if anything as novel as this project has taken place in higher education in recent years.

The origin and development of Marlboro College is the result of the dream of one man—Dr. Walter Hendricks, the president of this unusual institution. Because he felt that there was a place in America for a small, intimate college that was not shackled by time-honored traditions, he gave up prestige and security in the academic world to pioneer in higher education.

Three years ago Dr. Hendricks, chairman of the humanities department at Illinois Institute of Technology, returned from Europe, where he had helped the Army set up the American University at Biarritz, France. What he had seen there convinced him that it was possible to establish a college without huge financial backing or a slavish adherence to formalized educational practices.

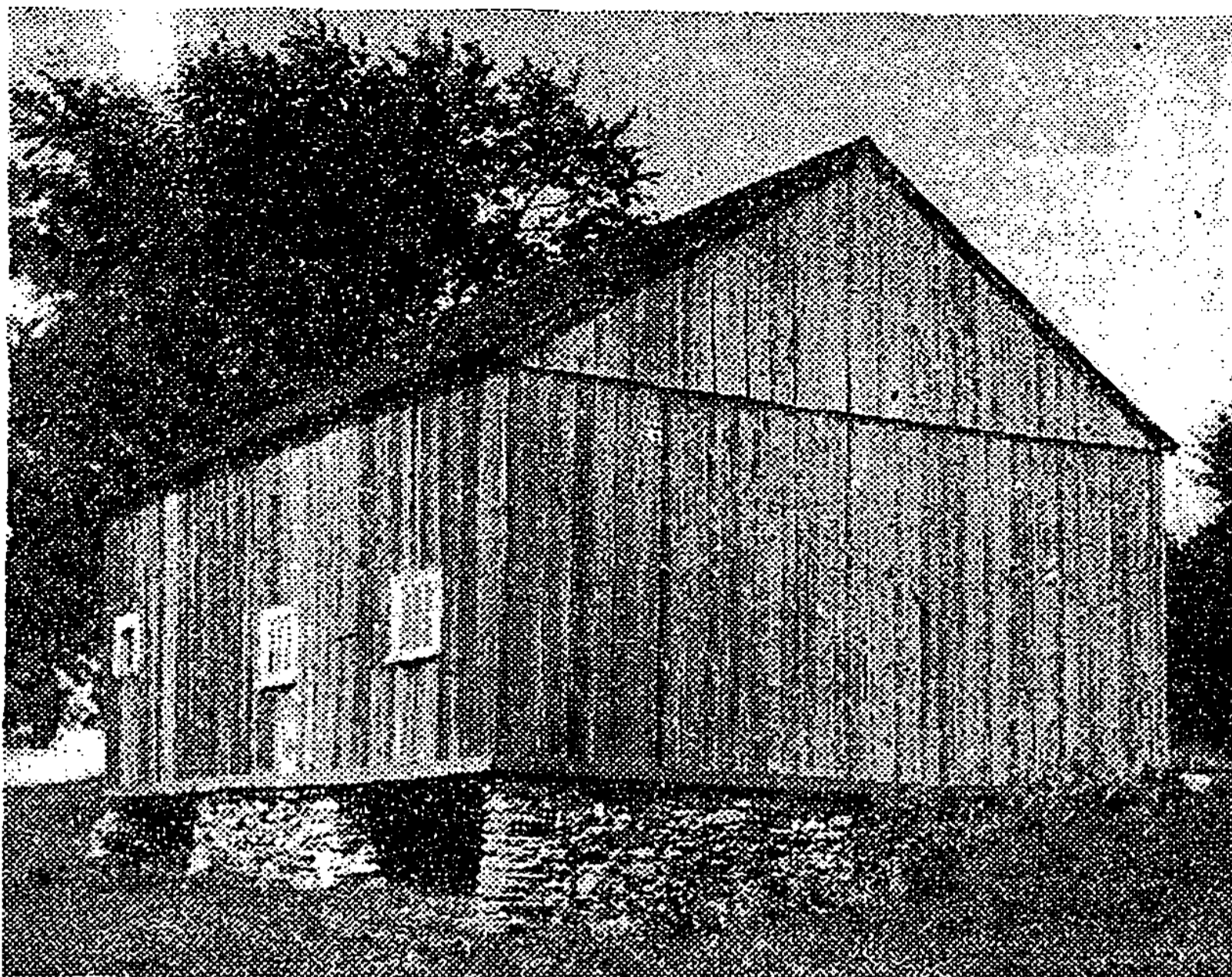
He visited his friend, Robert Frost, the poet, who has a farm near Marlboro, and discussed the plans he had for a new college. Mr. Frost agreed to become a member of the board of trustees.

Started on \$3,000 Cash

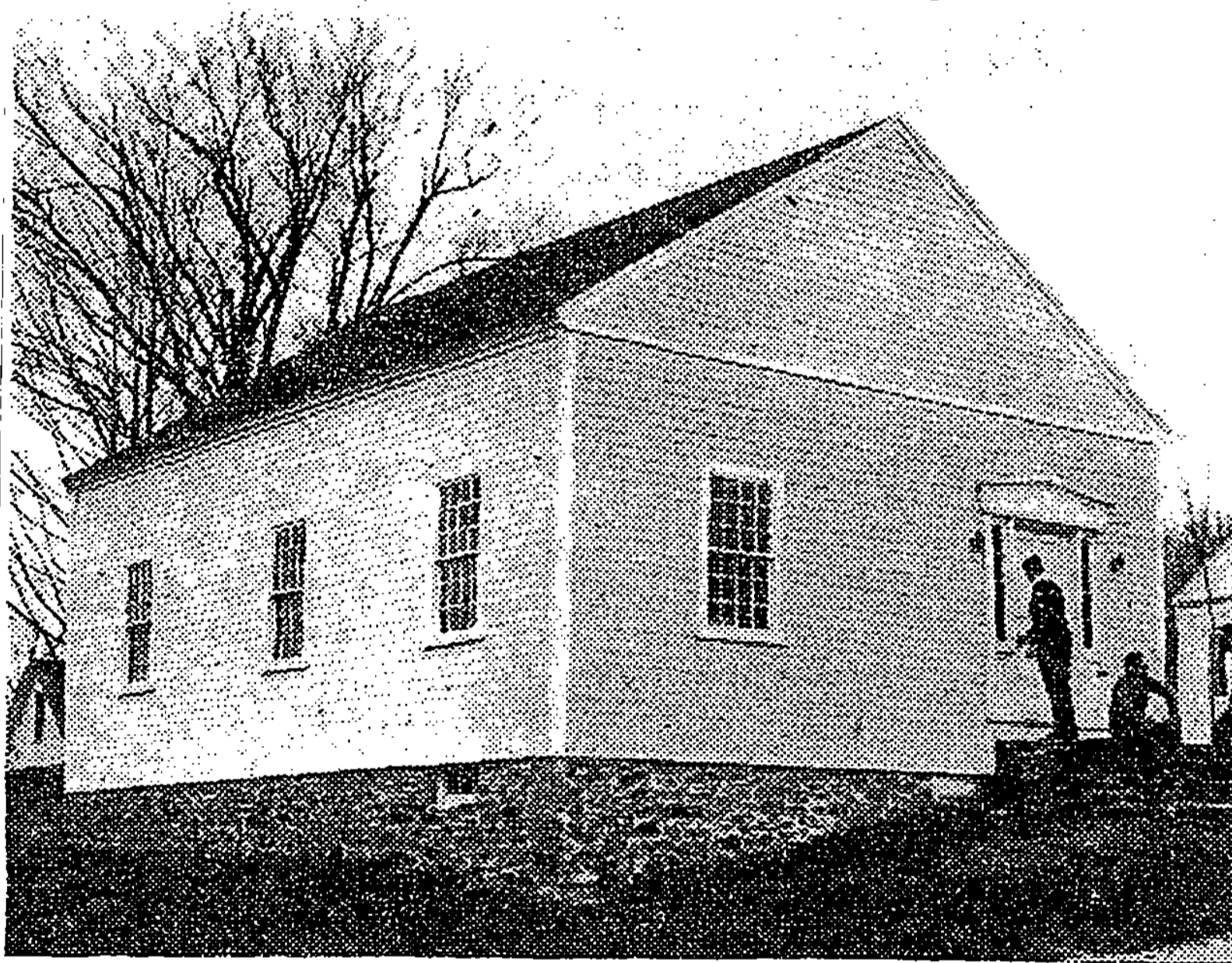
After some dickering, Dr. Hendricks bought a 400-acre farm on top of Potash Hill, so named because the early Vermont settlers burned trees to extract potash. He paid \$11,000 for the century-and-a-half old place—\$3,000 in cash and the rest a Brattleboro bank took over as a mortgage.

The college opened two years

A FARM TRANSFORMED INTO A COLLEGE



The old horse barn at Marlboro, Vt., as it looked before the students and faculty members went to work making changes.



The same building as it now appears and which is being used as the college library.

ago with fifty students. Last June one senior was in the graduating class.

Yesterday, 100 students sat on improvised chairs and lolled on the grass as five of their classmates received bachelor-of-arts degrees after listening to Senator Flanders of Vermont give the commencement address.

Will Keep It a Small College

Marlboro will always remain a small college; reaching, at most, an enrollment of 200 students, according to Dr. Hendricks. Only through small classes and individual instruction, he feels, can a student get the most out of college. But he goes beyond that. He is convinced that the community, too, should become a definite part of the campus.

Most of the support for the college to date has come from the

community. A square dance, under the auspices of the Ladies Aid Society, garnered \$100. A near-by school presented a play, giving the \$300 proceeds to the college. Several days ago a chorus from Bennington College, near by, joined with the Marlboro boys in a concert that netted \$1,000. This money will be used to buy a badly needed piano.

During the first year the total income amounted to \$55,000—most of it came from the \$600 yearly tuition charged the students. Board and room bring in an additional \$600 yearly from each student. Marlboro intends to live within its budget—a net operating profit of \$1,500 was registered this last year. Next year, with an income of \$100,000, the budget again will be balanced, despite vastly increased expenses.

Perhaps the college is "out of

the red" because Dr. Hendricks, faculty members and the students work together. Dr. Hendricks as president gets \$5,000 yearly—and this is cut considerably by necessary professional expenses connected with his job. His faculty members get \$3,600 for a nine-month period, or, on a yearly basis, just about what their chief receives. The students "pitch in" generally, and help in the building job without thought of payment.

Even the local townspeople have caught the spirit and cooperate in making the "farmstead" into a college.

The philosophy that guides Dr. Hendrick is easy to understand. He feels that a college can help bring a better, more democratic life to the community and thus to the nation. At Marlboro the "caste system" of education—such as places the teaching staff into competing categories of "professor," "associate professor," "assistant professor" and "instructor" is taboo. Everyone is of equal rank. All are called "mister."

Nor are there departments within the college, only courses of instruction. Much of the departmentalization of knowledge, Dr. Hendricks believes, is a "tragic error." Marlboro has become a "community of learners." Since it is not divided into administration or faculty, everyone is a member of the "college community"—the president, carpenter, teacher, dean, cook or student.

Citizenship Is Stressed

Education for citizenship is the underlying motif of the college. A "community government" has been established, modeled after the New England town meeting.

The students say they like the intimacy of the college—"just like a fraternity," as one of the boys put it, and added "but without any kind of discrimination."

"I've pounded nails for the last year and I've sure learned a lot," George Richards of Philadelphia said. He went to Temple University for a year, but last fall transferred to Marlboro. He calls the school "spontaneous."

"I like to be able to walk into the library—it was an old horse shed—and pick up a book without red tape," he observed to make his point.

Christopher Brown of Concord, Mass., a freshman agrees. He is majoring in history and is not quite certain just what he will do when he finishes—"anything but teach."

"I've laid flooring, hammered nails, put up boards and have done just about everything, I guess. It's wonderful to help build a college," he declared.

To Richard Doyle of Short Hills, N. J., this farm campus provides just the solitude he needs to do good scholastic work. He was in the Army for three and one-half years—in North Africa, Italy and France—and now the beautiful, quiet Vermont setting is a welcome contrast.

David Herzbrun of New Rochelle, N. Y., is now ending his second year here. In that time he has put in many hours on the barns, cowshed, former blacksmith shop and the other tumbled-down buildings that have taken on the amazing new collegiate look.