

# Classics at Colorado College

## A Short History 1876-

When [President](#) E. P. Tenney took over the inchoate Colorado College in 1876 (the summer of [Custer's Last Stand](#), of the Nation's [Centennial](#) and of Colorado's statehood), his first educational move was to hire W. D. Sheldon and send him to Colorado Springs to begin instruction in classics. Sheldon taught mostly preparatory students (it was six years before anyone graduated with a bachelor's degree) and he gave himself to the general educational development of the new state with op/ed pieces on compulsory education and a leadership role in the state education association. Tenney built Cutler Hall and pushed a very ambitious, evangelical program for the College that came to grief over his land speculations in 1884. Sheldon stayed through the subsequent interregnum and the start of W.F.Slocum's long administration, departing for the East in 1890. He later published a nice translation of works of Lucian : [A second-century satirist: or, Dialogues and stories from Lucian of Samosata](#) (Philadelphia and San Francisco, 1901, copy in the Special Collections, Tutt Library).

Slocum, in turn, led the College into its first golden age (1888-1917). Classics in his time was headed by Prof. M. C. Gile, who taught from 1892 until his death in 1916. Gile was a classic classics teacher: grammatically precise and demanding, gentle and understanding. He was also a community leader, a pillar of the First Baptist Church (his background was Andover and Brown) and a founder of the Colorado Springs National Bank with Willis Armstrong '99 as head teller (subsequently CEO and a long-time CC trustee): after several buy-outs the bank has joined Wells Fargo, but the Gile and [Armstrong descendants](#) continue strong in Colorado Springs and in support of CC.

Another Slocum-era professor was Ernest Bréhaut, who taught Latin and history and, after leaving CC in 1911, published what was for long the standard translation of *Cato the Censor on Farming* (New York, 1933).

When the Slocum presidency [crashed and burned](#) in 1917, with loss of many of the golden age faculty, Gile's successor, Princetonian Charles Christopher Mierow became a faculty leader, Acting President (1923-25) and President (1925-33). Mierow, a disciple of [Andrew Fleming West](#) of the Princeton Graduate College, studied classics as part of a tradition of Christian humanism. He worked on Jordanes' *Gothic History*, of which he published the standard English translation (Princeton, 1908), Isidore of Seville and Otto of Freising (*The two cities; a chronicle of universal history to the year 1146 A.D.*, translated with commentary, New York, 1928). He celebrated the 12<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance in the construction of [Shove Chapel](#) (1931), and he also, incidentally, presided over the end of the College's Latin requirement (also 1931).

Mierow's other duties meant that classics was taught in his time largely by others: his younger brother Herbert from 1918-43, Dorothy Printup from 1921 (when she left her University of Chicago Ph.D. dissertation project on Plautine comedy to replace Herbert Mierow as he worked on his M.A. at Princeton) until 1925 when, now married to the historian [Archer Hulbert](#), she

relinquished the duties to Marjorie Davis '19 (who taught from 1925-28 and whose M. A. thesis on Roman mining is in Special Collections). Dorothy Printup Hulbert, after her first husband's death in 1933, gave her scholarly attention to his unpublished work on western history, continuing in that field through many years and, as [Dorothy Bryson](#), receiving an honorary LLD degree in 1989. Meanwhile the Gile descendants began the endowment of a professorship in his honor, which was held first by Herbert Mierow from 1925-43.

The second golden age of Colorado College did not begin until the 1950s. Meanwhile, minus a Latin requirement, classics teaching was suspended from Herbert Mierow's retirement in 1943 until Stephanie Jakimowitz came in 1946. She represented a new generation of scholarship, with a Cornell dissertation on *andreia* (courage: that series of dissertations included also Helen North's well-known treatment of *sophrosyne* moderation). She, however, left the College with her husband, Ed Benton '50, in 1951, leading to an era of intermittent classics at CC. In 1955, the great Louis Benezet assumed the Presidency, with the stated purpose of bringing the College program, faculty and campus to a new level. He was, however, convinced that "the world's classic treasures" had been sufficiently translated into English, and he was content for Pres. Mierow, retired after two decades at Carleton College, to teach some courses in Greek and history, and for [Bob Ormes](#), outdoorsman and English prof., to teach Latin some of the time. Until 1965 CC had no full-time Classics Department.

CC's longest-running classics faculty is the current department: Owen Cramer 1965- and Marcia Dobson 1976-, both of whom have served longer than any other classics faculty person. (Charles Mierow's 45 years of association with the College were interrupted by decades of service at Carleton). Owen was hired after several years of discussion among faculty including philosopher J. Glenn Gray. A Homerist with training in the literary/Poundian graduate program at the University of Texas ([Arrowsmith](#), [Sullivan](#)), Owen has produced CC curriculum rather than classical scholarship. After a decade as a single-person department with no major, he was joined in 1976 by Marcia, a Harvard Ph.D. specializing in oracular language in Aeschylus, on a base of Renaissance studies (M.A. Tufts), who has gone on to deepen her interest and training in psychoanalysis with a second Ph.D. from the Pacifica Graduate Institute.

They reintroduced a department major in 1980, joined in the formation of the Classics-History-Politics major in 1983 and the Comparative Literature major in 1986, and have worked with about 100 classics majors, some of whom are now faculty members themselves. On sabbaticals they have been replaced by Paul Roth (1980-81), Jim Tucker (1987-90), Lisa Hughes (1995-97 and again 2002- in a visiting and then adjunct role) and Craig Dethloff (2003). Trish FitzGibbon joined the department in 1999 as a part-time instructor in Latin and went on to teach nearly full time as a "visiting" professor and to direct the Summer Latin Institute through 2007-08. With the coming of Sanjaya Thakur, a University of Michigan Ph.D. in classics with an archaeology M.A., as Assistant Professor on the tenure track in the fall of 2009--after a year as Riley Scholar in 2008-09--the department enters into a shift of generations and a new time of transformation.

With the fall of 2006, classics faculty ended a 40-year stay in Armstrong Hall, moving to offices in [Cossitt](#).

--Written by Owen Cramer 2005, revised October 2006, August 2010.