

## Chapter One

### Founding of Queen's College (1755-1771)

Rutgers University was founded as Queen's College in 1766. The religious leaders of the Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches had already sponsored colonial colleges. The leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church also moved to establish a college, which might educate the future leaders of their church.

Dutch families had come to settle the city of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island (later New York City), Long Island, Fort Orange (later Albany), and on the west side of the Hudson River as well. They also came to settle in New Jersey at Bergen and in the valleys of the Hackensack, Passaic, and Raritan Rivers. By 1664, when the English took New Netherland and established the names of New York and New Jersey, there were some ten thousand Dutch settlers in the region. Few new Dutch settlers came to the region after that time. The settlement of the Raritan Valley began, perhaps, with the purchase of land in what is now New Brunswick, by John Inian and others in 1681.<sup>1</sup>

The Dutch Church in America was controlled by the Classis of Amsterdam, even after the English took control of the territory in 1664. Prospective ministers had to go to the Netherlands for their seminary training and ordination. This procedure did not provide an adequate supply of ministers for the Dutch Church in America, and did not provide local control of the training of the ministers. In 1720 Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen became minister of the churches in the Raritan Valley. He sought greater independence from the church in Amsterdam, and is said to have been the first to suggest the establishment of a Dutch college and seminary in this country.<sup>2</sup> His sons, Rev. Theodorus (Theodore) Frelinghuysen (1724/25-1761) and Rev. John Frelinghuysen (1727-1754), carried on his work for the brief periods of their lives.<sup>3</sup> His

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<sup>1</sup>Demarest, *A History of Rutgers College*, 2, 8; Messler, *Forty Years at Raritan*, 160.

<sup>2</sup>Keator, *Six Mile Run Reformed Church*, 26.

<sup>3</sup>Messler, *Forty Years at Raritan*, 181.

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grandson, Frederick Frelinghuysen (1753-1804), was the first tutor of Queen's College (1771-1774), and his great-grandson, Theodore Frelinghuysen (1786/87-1862), was later President of the College (1850-1862).

Before Queen's College opened, the College of New Jersey (later Princeton College) received its first charter in 1746. The College opened at Elizabeth Town, moved to Newark, and then to Princeton in 1756.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, there were efforts to establish a new college in New York, supported by funds that had been raised by lotteries that had been authorized by the New York Legislature. The new college, King's College, received its charter in 1754. The majority of its original Board of Trustees were Anglicans. Initially, leaders of the Dutch Church in New York supported the founding of King's College. However, when the King's College charter was amended to provide for a professor of divinity, there was a sharp division among the leaders of the Dutch Church, some of whom wanted to establish a professor of divinity for the Dutch Church.<sup>5</sup>

One of those who differed with the leaders of the Dutch Church in New York was Theodorus (Theodore) Frelinghuysen, who convened the ministers and elders of the Dutch Church at a meeting in New York City in 1755. It is said that the idea of founding a Dutch college and seminary was first given definite form at that meeting. Frelinghuysen was commissioned to go to the Netherlands to seek support for the proposed college. The commission proposed "to plant a university or seminary for young men destined for study in the learned languages and in the liberal arts, and who are to be instructed in the philosophical sciences; also that it may be a school of the prophets in which young Levites and Nazarites of God may be prepared to enter upon the sacred ministerial office in the Church of God."<sup>6</sup> Of the eleven ministers who signed this commission, six were subsequently Trustees of Queens College, and, of these six, five had been trained and ordained in America. It is remarkable that this early commission called for including instruction in physics in the new college with its reference to "philosophical sciences."

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<sup>4</sup>Demarest, *A History of Rutgers College*, 31.

<sup>5</sup>McCormick, *Rutgers: A Bicentennial History*, 3.

<sup>6</sup>Demarest, *A History of Rutgers College*, 37.

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In 1749 John Frelinghuysen, son of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, succeeded his father as minister of the churches in the Raritan Valley. He made his home at Raritan, where he carried on the instruction of young men who wished to be trained for the ministry. It has been said that this home could be viewed as the prelude of Queen's College and the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick. John Frelinghuysen died in 1754 at the age of twenty-seven.<sup>7</sup>

It was not until 1759 that Theodorus (Theodore) Frelinghuysen was able to obtain release from his congregation in Albany and sail to Holland to seek support for the proposed college. Frelinghuysen spent two years in Holland, apparently without any significant success, although he appears to have raised some money there for the new college. In 1761 he returned to America, but died before reaching home, possibly having been drowned in the waters of New York Bay.<sup>8</sup>

One of John Frelinghuysen's students was Rev. Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh (1736-1790), who, after Frelinghuysen's death, married his widow and became minister of the church at Raritan. Hardenbergh joined with others in pressing the cause of the new college. Eventually, he became one of the first trustees of Queen's College, and later the first president of the College (1786-1790).<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in 1761, or even earlier, several ministers of the Dutch Church petitioned the Governor of New Jersey to approve a charter for a new college in New Jersey. Their requests were rejected by at least two governors. Finally, on November 10, 1766, Governor William Franklin granted a royal charter for Queen's College. The charter was issued by authority of King George III, in honor of Charlotte, the Queen Consort of Great Britain. Although no copy of the original charter has been found, it is believed to be very similar to the revised charter of 1770. The charter of 1770 provided for the following 41 Trustees: the Governor, the President of the Council, the Chief Justice, and the Attorney General of New Jersey, ex officio, 5 ministers and 16 laymen from the Province of New York, 6 ministers and 8 laymen from the Province of New Jersey, and two

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<sup>7</sup>Demarest, *A History of Rutgers College*, 44.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 48.

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ministers from the Province of Pennsylvania. All of the ministers were from the Dutch Church, as were all but a few of the laymen.<sup>10</sup>

The notice of the first meeting of the Trustees was published in the *New York Mercury* in April 1767. It referred explicitly to the granting of the royal charter on November 10, 1766. The first meeting of the Trustees was held in Hackensack on the second Tuesday in May 1767. Meetings of the Trustees were held regularly during the next four years, but instruction at the College did not begin until 1771. The need to raise money for professors or tutors, and for a building, delayed the start of the College. Of greater importance, however, there was continued opposition to the College by the Conferentie faction of the Dutch Church in this country and by the Classis in Amsterdam. Amsterdam urged the Coetus not to proceed quickly to implement the charter for the new College, and, as an alternative, to seek a union with the College of New Jersey at Princeton. It turned out that the opponents of the College in New York City did not favor the union with Princeton, and the Trustees of Queen's College rejected the request for union with Princeton.<sup>11</sup>

Another factor that contributed to the delay in starting the new College was the effort of the Trustees to revise the charter in order to change the restrictions in the original charter on raising money in New York. Finally, rather than revising the original charter, a new charter with the desired changes was granted by Governor William Franklin, in the name of King George III, on March 20, 1770. It is believed that this charter was very similar to the charter of 1766 and that the list of trustees was hardly changed.<sup>12</sup>

The 1770 charter contains wording, which indicates that it was granted in response to the needs of the Protestant Reformed churches of the United Provinces, and to the petition of their ministers and elders, but it contained no provision for ecclesiastical control. A primary object of the College was the supply of ministers for the churches, and a professorship of divinity was provided for, but it was not required that the professor of divinity be from the Dutch Church. The purpose of the college was to be "for the education of youth in the learned languages,

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<sup>10</sup>McCormick, *Rutgers: A Bicentennial History*, 5.

<sup>11</sup>Demarest, *A History of Rutgers College*, 61.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

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liberal and useful arts and sciences, and especially in divinity, preparing them for the ministry and other good offices.”<sup>13</sup>

The sole church requirement in the charter was that the Trustees would appoint from time to time a person who was a member of the Dutch Church to be President of the College. The members of the Board of Trustees, the professors and instructors, and the students were not subject to any ecclesiastical test, and not more than one-third of the trustees could be ordained ministers. In order to prevent the prevailing use of the Dutch language, and to promote the English language in the affairs of the College and the Dutch people, there was a provision that there should be at least one professor or instructor of English, and that the documents relating to the business of the College should be in English only.<sup>14</sup>

Another reason for the delay in starting the College was the difficulty in reaching a decision about the location of the College. Residents of Hackensack, Tappan, and New Brunswick all sought to have the new College located in their towns. Finally, on May 7, 1771, the Trustees voted to locate the Queen's College in New Brunswick, referring to the fact that the residents of New Brunswick had raised the largest amount of money to support the College.<sup>15</sup>

The Trustees met in New Brunswick on October 5, 1771, and voted to begin classes on the second Tuesday of November. They appointed Frederick Frelinghuysen Tutor “to instruct the students who shall offer themselves, in the learned Languages, liberal Arts and Sciences, in order to prepare them for the usual Degrees” and “to teach the English Language grammatically.”<sup>16</sup> Frederick Frelinghuysen was the grandson of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, son of John Frelinghuysen, and stepson of Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh. He graduated from Princeton in 1770 at the age of 17, and was between the age of 18 and 19 when he became the first tutor at Queen's College. The Tutor and three Trustees, John Leydt, Martinus Van Harlingen, and Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, were assigned the responsibility for the government and direction of the College until a qualified president could be appointed.

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<sup>13</sup>Demarest, *A History of Rutgers College*, 75.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.