

Frank S. Hyer
1930-1938

Frank S. Hyer, then president at Whitewater State Teachers College, was named to succeed Robert D. Baldwin in 1930. Hyer was no stranger to Stevens Point, for he had served on the faculty there from 1904 to 1919, the last 10 years as principal of the training school.

The 61-year-old Hyer had behind him a long and successful career in Wisconsin education and Stevens Point was happy to have him back.

The decade of the thirties was not to be a time for starting many new programs at Central State. The Depression had diminished state income and many legislators regarded higher education as a dispensable luxury. Budgets were drastically cut and Hyer discontinued small classes where it was possible to do so.

As the Depression deepened enrollment at Central State boomed. The rapid increase was not expected by the regents or the presidents in the state system. In 1932 Central State was second in size to Milwaukee State Teachers College.

College athletics were in their heyday and intervarsity sports got a lift when Stevens Point brought in Eddie Kotal to coach. Kotal had been a Green Bay Packer football star and an All American Pro. The teachers college competition was keen in those years and getting Kotal was considered a great coup.

In the normal school days speech activities were as important as athletics, and well into the 30s oratory was considered by many as more important. Under Coach Leland M. Burroughs, Pointer orators made a habit of bringing home top honors.

Hyer brought Peter J. Michelsen one of the state's outstanding band men to Stevens Point. Michelsen is remembered not only for his traditional Christmas concerts in the college auditorium, but for the atmosphere he created there with brightly lit Christmas trees he and his students brought in from the woods. Edna Carlsten and her art classes set the stage for the nativity scene as Burroughs spoke an appropriate selection.

Elementary education was a major interest of Hyer and he put much emphasis on that phase of the curriculum. He brought Susan M. Colman from Whitewater to head the primary education department.

A radio studio installed in the college was another major innovation during the period. Norman E. Knutzen formed the Men's Glee club in 1933 with 26 members. The popular singing group quickly earned the name of "Good Will Ambassadors" as they traveled about during those years.

As the decade waned, President Hyer wanted to retire. He tried three times before the Board of Regents finally allowed him to hand over the reins as he requested. He was persuaded to remain until July 1938 because the senior class that year expressed the desire to graduate with Hyer still at the helm.