Open Door: Grand Rapids Junior/Community College 1914-2014
by Walter Lockwood

The Jewel In Our Midst   A Review by Thomas R. Dilley

It is disturbing to admit, as one of its tens of thousands of graduates, that the arrival of the centenary of Grand Rapids Community College, came as a surprise to me. Yes, it had always been there, and I know hundreds of people whose adult lives and careers began in its classrooms. But, like many others, I had never really given it much thought, either about what it has become or how it has impacted our community.

All of that changed with the reading of Walter Lockwood’s superb history of the College, *Open Door: Grand Rapids Junior/Community College 1914-2014*, released in November 2014. The book is everything that GRCC (or GRJC, if you attended when I did) deserves in the year of the 100th anniversary of its founding, and it is everything one could hope for in a history of this remarkable institution.

From Lockwood’s capable and experienced hands, the history and accomplishment of the many who created, fostered and defended the College are delivered and (perhaps for the first time) critically analyzed in thoughtful, welcoming prose that is refreshingly distant from the usual self-aggrandizing reportage filling the pages of the countless corporate and college histories on the shelves of unread libraries. This is a college history that deserves to be read, and will enlighten many about the processes that, from its earliest days have made Grand Rapids Community College one of the most consistently vibrant elements of the Western Michigan community. That, together with a vast array of carefully captioned photographs spanning the entire history of the College, would be enough to secure for this book its just place in local and regional history. But, there is more.

In the telling of the GRJC/GRCC story, Lockwood has also included a useful recitation of the history and politics of local education during the past century. Names and stories that might have drifted away are brought back into the light they deserve. Jesse Davis, Arthur Andrews and Richard Calkins, relentless promoters of the College; Benjamin Beukema and Jay Pylman, progressive Superintendents; and even legendary coaches John Bos and Gordon Hunsberger are all discussed and credited for their roles in the century-long history of the College. All of this results in a history not only of the College, but of the educational system in which it was fostered, grew and ultimately triumphed.

This book, written, designed, created and edited within the College, should be acquired and read by the thousands of the College’s (like me, sometimes unappreciative) graduates, and especially by all those who may think of it all as “just JC”.

Actually, there are two jewels in this story. One obviously is the College itself. The other is this book, a great and worthy edition to the history of our city and region.

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