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Editor: John M. Brenner

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Cover picture

The Kaffeemuehle on the Watertown campus 1866

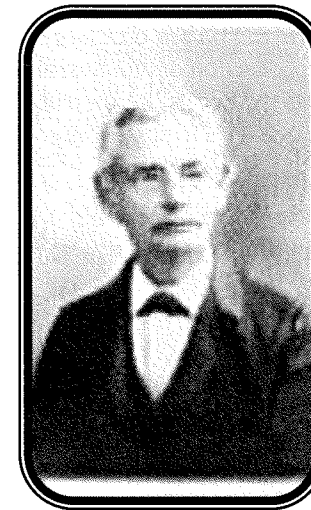
## Our Seminary in Watertown: 1863-1870

### Part Two

Prof. James Danell

#### Year Four: 1866-1867

On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1866, the seminary in Watertown installed Professor Adolph Hönecke as Inspektor and Professor. The installation service was held in the large prayer hall (*Betsaal*) of the seminary building. The service began at 10 a.m. with the singing of the hymn "Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now." Synod President Streißguth read Psalm 24, and Board President Bading delivered the sermon based on Matthew 13:31-32. He spoke about the precious gift of pure doctrine inherited from the Reformation and called upon Professor Hönecke to teach this same doctrine to the seminary students and thus to make them fit preachers. He then pledged Professor Hönecke to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions. Professor Hönecke next spoke about the center of all pure teaching: the doctrine of the person of Christ the Redeemer. In the meeting of the Board which followed the installation service, Professor Hönecke was also pledged to the handbook (*Hausordnung*).<sup>102</sup> It was Professor Hönecke, more than anyone else, whose name would be associated with Wisconsin's seminary until his death in 1908.



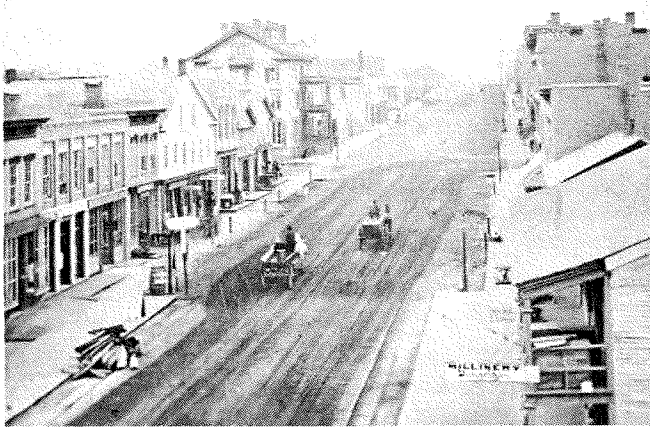
*Professor Adolph Hönecke*

So began the fourth year of the seminary's existence. Mrs. Hönecke took over the housemother duties which Mrs. Koester had done the year before. Because the Höneckes had free room and board, Professor Hönecke's salary was set at \$500. J. P. Koehler identifies just four students, another decline in enrollment.<sup>103</sup> They were Louis Junker, a returning student, Albert Siegler, who had returned after spending a year at St. Louis, Christoph Dowidat (Dovidad), a teacher from Lithuania whom the *Langenberger Verein* had sent, and Wilhelm Schimpf, from P. Köhler's congregation. Aug. Schmidt had left the seminary because he was "not fit for the public ministry." Among the 68 enrolled in the college department, one was training to be a teacher, and between six and eight looked promising for the seminary.<sup>104</sup> Despite the previous year's operating deficit, the seminary continued to offer free tuition, room, and board for those preparing for the ministry who needed it.<sup>105</sup>

Finances continued to be a vexing problem. The seminary did receive financial support from unexpected places— gifts of money and books arrived from Germany, Russia, and even St. Louis. The synod's own congregations, however, present a

mixed report. Some supported the seminary generously, while others supported it either sparingly, or not at all. In the October 15 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, the following article appeared.

To the dear congregations and brothers in the ministry. Taste and see that the Lord is good. These, dear congregations, should be the thoughts with which everyone in your midst looked at the high stalks of grain or at the filled barns and floors. Yes, the Lord has been kind. You taste it. You see it. Now, dearly beloved, here we sit in our seminary, a small group of teachers and students. We look around us, but we don't see any stalks of grain or filled barns. But nevertheless we also cry out: Taste and see that the Lord is good, as if we too had rich harvests to bring in. We do that in the simple faith that you have harvested also for us, that we will also get our share of the harvest. We believe that you will ask yourselves how you can show the good Giver your thanks for the gifts of God you have received, and that you will regard it as well-done to give to the school something of the blessing given to you. From this school still better gifts will come for you and your children than those which God allowed to grow in your fields. It is really necessary that you remember your theological school in Watertown in active love, for not only is there often a lack of supplies for its daily need in it, there are also still some pressing debts from earlier times. Therefore we would like, in the name of our common Lord, to direct our request to you, that you might desire to have a collection for the seminary on the coming Thanksgiving, and so that it is a generous one, and also made known ahead of time, we call on our brothers in the ministry, that they may desire to urgently lay this collection on the hearts of their dear congregations. May the Lord, who directs the hearts, desire truly to open many hearts to alleviate every need and let us see his kindness here. May he do it for his name's sake. Amen.<sup>106</sup>



Watertown, Wisconsin

Aside from finances, which were not an insignificant issue, the fourth year of the Watertown seminary seems to have gone smoothly. "Strict disciplinary proceedings were therefore scarcely required."<sup>107</sup> Just one disciplinary case had to be brought before the board. The seminary also hired someone to help with running the building since, in Hönecke's opinion, that was better in a number of ways than asking the seminary students to do it. And like his predecessor, Professor Hönecke also did some teaching in the college department, served as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, and preached in vacant congregations in the area. Apparently the work of teaching college courses and serving vacancies became so much during the year that Hönecke felt he would need to ask for help.

The financial part of operating the seminary, however, brought problems. Once again, expenses had been more than income. The Board of Trustees decided to speak directly to the pastors and lay members of the synod through the *Gemeinde-Blatt* once again. In the June 1 edition of 1867, just before the synod was to meet in convention, the following article appeared from the pen of Board President Bading.

The well-known, very sad lack of preachers and teachers caused the synod in due course to proceed to the founding of a seminary in order, for its part, to help to bring the Means of Grace to abandoned brothers in the faith for the salvation of their souls. The synod believed at that time that its members—preachers and congregations—were themselves completely convinced of the need for this step and filled with love for their brothers, and that a lack of support could never occur. In this strong faith the synod moved ahead. . . . And how far have we come now? Praise God! We did not labor in vain. We can point to 10 young men who are preparing for the holy ministry and we may live in the hope that soon the blessing of our work, if not in streams yet still in a tangible way will be passed on to our congregations. . . . —But, how is a large part of our pastors and congregations reacting to the great need and the great work which has become necessary through it? Dear reader, be you a preacher or a member of a congregation, let your conscience give an answer to this question. What have **YOU** contributed to the support of this highly necessary work? Our synod numbers about 90 congregations with \_\_\_\_\_ communicants. So, should it be so hard to manage the budget of the seminary without debts increasing yearly? Certainly not, if all preachers and congregations would be as willing as some. But a sad state of affairs emerges when one looks more closely. In the past synodical year, the budget of the seminary had to pay out \$400 more than it took in. With joy in our hearts we acknowledge the faithful work of some congregations. But with deep pain we must look at the large number of those who have taken no part at all in our common work. What is lacking, brothers? Has God the Lord not blessed? Has he withheld the early and late rains, so that you, despite your sincere desire, can't carry on the Lord's work? That is something no one will want to say. Or are the pure Word and Sacrament such insignificant things in your opinion

that we can withhold them from our brothers in the faith without liability? If that is so, then it is high time that each of us beat his breast and ask God for enlightenment, so that we can recognize the grace of God given through them. Then a warm beating of our pulse for our brothers who are in need will follow.

The Board of Trustees lives in the hope that our dear brothers in the ministry and their congregations need only the clear reference to the actual conditions in order to make sluggish hands eager and active tools for the support of this great work. The Board has therefore instructed its current officers to lay **this urgent appeal** on the hearts of all congregations and pastors, especially those who have done little or nothing up till now. **Please bring to the upcoming synodical convention a collection gathered from house to house.** May God provide many willing givers! Dear brothers, let your congregations know: tell them about the sad need. Call to them loudly and clearly: "Where are the other nine?" who have experienced the blessing of the Lord and his recent help, and are now going on their way, cold toward such love? Keep calling until all come and involve themselves in thankfulness toward their heavenly Father. Give, and it will be given to you. Who believes that?<sup>108</sup>

When the synod met for its 1867 convention, it was once again Board President and now also synodical Vice-president Bading, who laid the seminary and its work on the hearts of the delegates as he had done so many times before. His plea was echoed by President Streißguth and Professor Hönecke in their reports.

Often we have sighed before the Lord over such a lack of participation, and we feel compelled to let our laments take voice and to express our urgent petition to our congregations and their pastors to have more heart for this matter of God and to want to provide the seminary more substantial help. Judge for yourself. Must it not be a truly embarrassing feeling for the Inspector and his wife to have to manage things with the awareness that the hearts in the synod are not beating everywhere and warmly for the seminary? Must the treasurer not lose all joy in his work, when he so often, devoid of all means, is supposed to pay for the expenditures, which the daily support of about 19 people require? A general willingness to sacrifice in order not only decently to maintain our institution, but also to raise and put aside in addition a modest annual salary for the fund for the theological professorship is a trifle among some of our pastors and their congregations. If the pastors of the synod would make the effort to prevail upon the families of their congregations to make an annual contribution of just 50 cents, which in this land so richly blessed should not be hard, the administration would have more means at their disposal than are necessary for paying all the costs of the seminary.<sup>109</sup>

Bading also updated the convention on the matter of a pre-seminary in Germany. Though war<sup>110</sup> had made Pastor Lohmann's initial plans for such a program no longer feasible, Dr. Wichern in Berlin had made a similar offer. No doubt this was welcome news for the delegates who had earlier heard President Streißguth tell them that "the founding of a pre-seminary program in Germany is being recognized more and more as a necessity for the seminary."<sup>111</sup> As Streißguth saw it, increased enrollment in the seminary would translate into more interest and support from synod's congregations. In September, synod sent Pastor Vorberg to Germany for the purpose of making the plan for a pre-seminary program there a reality.<sup>112</sup>

The committee responsible for the seminary and college brought a number of recommendations before the convention. They asked that before someone was taken into the seminary program, careful thought be given to his prospect of completing it. They also requested that consideration be given to a simplified pre-seminary program that did not require the "older languages" for older or less gifted students, or that they be trained as elementary school teachers. They suggested that it might help with support for the seminary if the board would express the thought that gifts given would be used only for the purpose for which they had been given. Furthermore, the committee wholeheartedly supported what they had heard about Dr. Wichern's offer to establish a pre-seminary program in Berlin.

That offer, however, would not last. For this was the time when synod was finally cutting its ties with the union mission societies in Germany, the same societies from which it had received so much financial support for its seminary and so many of its pastors and pastoral candidates. By the time the next synod convention would convene, synod would basically be on its own—for the support of its seminary, and for the support of everything else.

### Year Five: 1867-1868

The 1867-1868 school year, which began on September 12, was relatively quiet, at least as far as academics and student life were concerned. In his exceedingly brief seminary report to the synod, Inspector Hönecke wrote, "In general, the state of things during the course of the synodical year with respect to discipline was quite satisfactory."<sup>113</sup> Seminary enrollment remained low, however—just four students. Only one student, Carl Oppen, from Höxter in Westphalia, was new. He had come from the *Berlin Verein*.<sup>114</sup> The synod remained hopeful, however, that Pastor Vorberg's trip to Germany would result in increased enrollment. In an update to the synod in the October 1 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, the author commented that in Pastor Vorberg's trip to Germany, "we think that we have hit upon the right way to alleviate the great need" for pastors. Synod appealed for a special Reformation festival offering.<sup>115</sup> The October 15 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* presented the formal announcement of the offering.

Celebration of the Reformation and Seminary. From this heading, most of our readers will have already guessed what we want to say in these lines. Some

are also probably thinking: Not giving again! There is no end to this begging! Ok, you guessed it. Actually, we want nothing other than to bring to your hearts, dear brothers in the ministry and congregations, the request which we expressed in the last edition, to remember our seminary for preachers at the upcoming Reformation celebration. Who knows—and every Lutheran Christian should rightly know—with what inestimable, precious goods the Lord has blessed us since he awakened his servant Martin Luther 350 years ago, to put the light of the gospel, which had so shamelessly been put under the bushel basket, back on the lampstand. Whoever has learned from his Bible, which was put into his hand through the Reformation, how he can gather treasures which last to eternal life, and who does in fact gather them, we have to think that someone like that would not be able to do anything other than joyfully show himself thankful. Here is an opportunity to do that, and to be sure, an urgent one. Our seminary is in need of the most speedy and energetic support from our congregations. —When we have stepped forward with our plea before, we heard on occasion, there aren't any students in the seminary. For the three or four who are there, there is no need for such great efforts. Now, this excuse has been taken from the unhappy givers. At the moment, we have seventeen young people in the seminary who are preparing themselves either for work as teachers or preachers, and who, for their physical support and education, either can pay nothing at all, or just a little. To fill seventeen young stomachs each day, which can eat, is a task that requires the help of our entire synod to fulfill. When we see in the church newspapers of other synods what their congregations are doing for their schools, we cannot hide that our congregations, with only a few laudable exceptions, are a distant second. In connection with the upcoming Reformation celebration in particular, most Lutheran synods will bring a considerable offering for the kingdom of God. We ourselves have read about one congregation which has decided to offer a tenth on this occasion for the purposes of the church. So then, dear brothers, let us not stay behind. Whoever has much, give generously. And whoever has little, give it with faithful and cheerful hearts.<sup>116</sup>

As one pages through subsequent editions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, one sees that this call for a special offering met with some success, especially as farmers harvested their crops. One also notices regular gifts from women's groups. This acknowledgment in particular catches one's attention. "With sincere thanks I acknowledge the receipt of two quilts and two sets of sheets which the women's group of West Granville recently gave to the seminary. The women's group of West Granville has seen to the seminary's need in this matter with real faithfulness. How very desirable the inquiry of other women's groups would be in this matter. In the coldest days of the winter, we have sometimes been afraid we would find some of our theological students frozen in the morning, so inadequately were they supplied with quilts."<sup>117</sup>

Any growth in offerings, however, was immediately matched by a growth in the need for more. The college student body was continuing to grow. At present, enrollment was around 90—at least when it wasn't harvest time. Among the students were about twenty who planned on studying for the pastoral ministry. The college was showing the potential to become the seminary feeder school synod had hoped for. The success Pastor Bading was having in selling scholarships gave the impression that the college enrollment would double very quickly. In the *Gemeinde-Blatt* of March 15, 1868, President Bading also announced that the Board of Trustees had felt compelled to authorize the building of a dormitory at a cost of \$5,000 to \$7,000. He appealed to the members of the synod to follow the example of two businessmen, Mr. Inbusch and Mr. Borth, who had contributed the first \$1,000. Subsequent issues of the church publication do not, however, report a large number of gifts. Eventually, the board settled for a plan to build two, two-story frame houses at a cost of \$2,750. Only one of them, however, was actually built. In addition, the board purchased 30 acres of land to the north at a cost of \$6,475. Debt was mounting at a rapid pace.

No doubt it was a time of great joy when, in July of 1868, the Watertown seminary was able to produce two more graduates, Louis Junker and Chr. Dowidat. Synod had now provided three of its own pastors through its own seminary.

The one matter that was of great concern to Professor Hönecke was the health of his wife. At the synod convention in June of 1868, he reported that her health simply would not allow her to continue to manage the household affairs of the seminary. No doubt the personal tragedy which the Hönecke's had suffered during the year was a contributing factor. During the night of February 19<sup>th</sup>, the Hönecke's little son Hermann died after a short illness.

Though its fifth year of operation had in many ways been a smooth one, finances continued to plague both seminary and college. Pastor Bading, once again president of the synod, wrote,

In general let it be said here that we had to live through and overcome hard days and great difficulties in the maintaining and furthering of our institutions. The seminary, which should be carried by the synod like a child in one's arms, is being repeatedly forgotten. Most of our pastors and congregations are doing as good as nothing in raising money for the professor's salary and for the things our students need for their livelihood, as well as the other household things. The thought and the awareness that in the synod there is so little participation in the development of our institutions does little to encourage or to cheer those of us who live in Watertown and have to carry the heavy load and concern, to keep working with joyful hearts for that which the synod itself, to such a high degree, is neglecting. . . . If the Lord had let us suspect the difficulties which now stand in the way, before the founding of our institutions, we would have perhaps backed away from carrying out our plans before we started.<sup>118</sup>

Even the man who more than anyone else had championed the cause of a seminary from the very beginning was having second thoughts. Almost everyone else who spoke about the seminary at the convention of 1868 echoed President Bading's remarks.

Though financial support from the congregations of the synod continued to lag, and though synod still owed \$1,900 on the original seminary building, the trustees felt they had no choice but to construct a dormitory for college students who had enrolled at the Watertown school as a result of the scholarships synod had sold. Synod supported them in that decision.

Other convention items also dealt with financial matters at the seminary. To the delegates the list must have sounded like a steady drumbeat of woe. Though synod had wanted to provide free tuition and greatly reduced (or free) room and board to anyone preparing for the pastoral ministry who needed it, the board felt it could no longer continue this practice exactly as it had in the past. Synod therefore passed a resolution which had come originally from the trustees, requiring all seminary and pre-seminary students to sign a document stating that they would reimburse synod if for some reason they discontinued their preparation for the pastoral ministry. After a lengthy debate, the delegates also resolved "that the pastors and delegates be called on most urgently to see to it that every congregation member pledge a specific yearly contribution for the support of the seminary."<sup>119</sup> Perhaps nothing else during the convention impressed on the delegates the dire financial situation of the seminary more than the closing words of the treasurer's report. "In conjunction with giving this present report, the undersigned treasurer allows himself to ask the honorable synod most urgently to be sufficiently concerned that the treasurer be put in a position to satisfy the requests made of him with respect to the payment of money. Otherwise he would see himself compelled to resign the office given to him. At the moment, the finances are such that the undersigned is not in a position to be able to pay either the twenty-five percent of the construction costs which are due according to the contract, nor the salaries of the teachers, nor the operational costs."<sup>120</sup> For the most part, this seems to be the sum and substance of the seminary reports to synod in the summer of '68.

Two other suggestions had been made at the convention. One suggestion, which appears in the synodical minutes without rationale, was the approval to call Dr. Münkkel, who was from Germany, to serve as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* and to a professorship at the seminary. (President Bading reported to synod the following year that Dr. Münkkel had declined synod's call.) In addition, the delegates heard from Synod Secretary Vorberg about yet another possibility for the establishment of a pre-seminary program in Germany. (Pastor Vorberg had travelled to Germany after the 1867 convention for the purpose of once again seeking support for the Wisconsin seminary abroad, both in terms of money and manpower.) This time, however, things were quite different from what they had been four years earlier. Synod was in the process of cutting its ties with the union mission societies, who did not appreciate synod holding out one hand for money, while holding a scissiors in the other.

In July of 1868, the Board of Trustees decided that they needed to take more aggressive measures to increase financial support for the Watertown schools among the congregations of the synod. To that end, they engaged Mr. August Gamm, a very active layman in the Synod, to serve as a *Collector*. Today he would perhaps be called a "special giving counselor" or a "mission advancement officer." His job was to travel from congregation to congregation to inform people about the Watertown schools and to gather offerings for their support. The members of the board announced his position in the *Gemeinde-Blatt* of July 15, 1868, and called upon the congregations to receive him and support him in his work for the sake of the gospel. From subsequent editions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, it appears that Mr. Gamm's work enjoyed real success, more success than one notices in connection with any previous appeal.

### Year Six: 1868-1869

In the fall of 1868, the Watertown seminary began its sixth year. Once again, synodical reports contain very little to no detail about the year itself. Among the students were several who had served in congregational schools before enrolling at the seminary. The seminary's working assumption was that these students would be prepared for the pastoral ministry in a relatively short time. That was good, because time was short that year. With the outbreak of a small-pox epidemic, the Board of Trustees was forced to end the academic year just before Easter and send the students home. The board saw as a special grace of God that the student body experienced no cases of severe illness or death. Despite the shortened year, synod was still able to produce two more seminary graduates, numbers four and five. They were Albert Siegler and Carl Oppen. Siegler had passed his examination, graduated, and been called during the previous Advent to Menominee, and Oppen during Lent to Columbus.

In May of 1869, no doubt noticing that offerings for the Watertown schools had begun to decline, the *Gemeinde-Blatt* once again recommended the Watertown schools' "Agent," Mr. August Gamm, to the congregations of the synod. In the article, President Bading spoke of his long acquaintance with Mr. Gamm, of his active service in his local Watertown congregation, and of his fine Christian character. He assured the members of every congregation that they could receive Mr. Gamm with the utmost confidence. He admonished some in particular to join in supporting the synod's worker-training schools.

Many, and this I say with sorrow, have brought little, and in some instances nothing at all as an offering in this work of the Lord. What is reason for that? For the most part, it is a lack of goodwill, of a Christian, self-sacrificing spirit. People say: it's a bad time. Prices for crops are down. There is no business. We don't have an income. That's all true. The Lord has allowed a truly miserable time to come over us. We intend to yield to it humbly and in repentance, confessing that we have deserved much more miserable times. But general

experience teaches, that the people who are not willing to do something for the work of God now, for the most part have also done little or nothing at all in past, better times. Even in the best of years, our schools have not had to complain about having too much. Now, in this difficult time, however, the shortage has become a very tangible one.<sup>121</sup>

In June of 1869, the Board of Trustees presented to the synod convention a rather mixed report. The past year had had its share of difficulties. "To be sure, in this work, we were not lacking sad experiences, nor quite a number of in part not insignificant difficulties. Sometimes we did not know what to do, and we almost lost courage." Tough times had not, however, been the whole story. "But the Lord our God did not turn his smiling face away from the work of our hands. Through the experiences we had, he made us smarter, allowed us to recognize and remedy all kinds of deficiencies, and now and then he allowed us to experience joy, which encouraged and cheered us up for our continued work."<sup>122</sup>

Though not directly connected to the seminary, the board also reported that one of the two dormitory homes under construction was finished and had been occupied, and that most of the money Mr. Gamm had collected had been used to pay for that building project. The board also announced that they felt it would have been irresponsible on their part, from the perspective of the long-term interest of the institution, not to accept an offer to purchase a thirty-acre parcel of land adjacent to the seminary grounds at a cost of \$6,475.00. The synod approved both the position of Mr. Gamm and the purchase of the land.

Other seminary matters that came before the convention included the following. Pastor Harms in Hermannsburg, in full agreement with synod's doctrine and practice, had expressed his willingness to send students from his mission to Watertown, provided synod support the work of his mission financially. Things also looked promising in Mecklenberg for the establishment of a pre-seminary program. Pastor Chrestin in Bützow was willing to establish such a program conjointly with a school for teachers which had just opened. He did want to know, however, what level of preparation students needed before coming to the Watertown seminary, and whether or not it was desirable or necessary that students learn the "old languages." President Bading did not want to answer those questions before consulting with synod. The convention said they would let the answers to such questions up to the professors of our Watertown school. Though the synod convention was happy for the offer, the delegates did want Pastor Chrestin to know, however, that synod was not in a position to support such a program financially. Synod had also received word that others in Germany were willing to provide young men with a pre-seminary training at a nearby *Gymnasium* and then send them to the Watertown seminary. As a result of its cutting of all ties with union mission societies, synod had also received official word from the Prussian High Church Council that it would be using the money which President Bading had collected for mission work in North America; the money would not, however, be coming to Watertown. After

debating the question, synod officially resolved not to make any claim on the funds.<sup>123</sup> Other financial reports included the announcement of an operating deficit of \$2,400.34, (It would seem that this was for both seminary and college.) and debt totaling \$3,373.09.

The big news at the convention of 1869, however, was no doubt the announcement of a plan to consider joining Wisconsin's Watertown seminary with Missouri's St. Louis seminary. The way for such an amalgamation had been cleared when synod had finally cut all ties with all union mission societies in Germany. At the request of the 1868 convention, Pastor Bading and others had met with key members of the Missouri Synod with the hope of clearing up any misunderstandings between the two synods. The result of these meetings was the recognition of the doctrinal fellowship between Missouri and Wisconsin, something that was now coming before the synod for official action. As a result of that fellowship, the suggestion had been made of a joint seminary. Wisconsin would provide a professor for St. Louis. Wisconsin's school in Watertown would then become a "flourishing and influential *Gymnasium*" with teachers and students coming also from the Missouri Synod. It would also have an English academy and a college. The board had been seriously considering such an amalgamation during the year and had appointed a committee to work out the details. The trustees were now ready to present the matter to the synod for its consideration. Their recommendation reads as follows: "To the extent that we have considered this matter, we are convinced that this union may become a means through which the work of our hands, under God's grace and blessing, could be substantially advanced, and that it would be a special kindness of our God, if he were to allow the realization of the plan we have conceived to succeed for us. We therefore believe that we are acting in the interest of our precious Lutheran church and also in particular in the interest of our institution, when we submit this matter to the honorable synod and recommend acceptance." The committee which discussed the recommendation brought back a majority and a minority report. The majority report recommended adoption of the proposal. The minority report of W. Dammann asked only that the synod wait a year before deciding. After a "lengthy debate" the delegates approved the majority recommendation.<sup>124</sup>

### Year Seven: 1869-1870

Given the financial situation in Watertown, one might have expected synod to move its seminary to St. Louis effective immediately. Such was not, however, the case. The Watertown seminary opened again in the fall. When it did, the enrollment more than doubled, from four to eleven. J.P. Koehler identifies the entire student body. "Five of them had been sent by Harms in Hermannsburg-Hannover: C. Althof, [C.] A[dolf] [M.] Zuberbier, H. Dageförde, [H. J. or F.] R. Haack, [Heinrich August] Ph. Kleinhans. Conrad Jaeger had received his training in the Hessian teacher seminary at Friedberg and helped out in St. Mark's school at Watertown; Gustav Denninger was a brother to the earlier seminary student who had switched



to teaching.... W. Schimpf, H. Hoops, J. Hodtwalker, Julius Haase completed the roster."<sup>125</sup> Koehler also reports where all of these students went. "Zuberbier, Haack, Kleinhans, Jaeger, Denninger, and Schimpf passed their examinations by Christmas and, barring the last-named, were admitted to the ministry: Jaeger at Mosel, Zuberbier at Two Rivers..., Dagefoerde at Leeds, Haack at Wrightstown and Depere (sic)."<sup>126</sup> Koehler also tells us why "the last-named," W. Schimpf, was not admitted to the ministry immediately, though he had passed his theological examinations. "Schimpf, on account of his youth, was sent as assistant to Koehler at Hustisford (who earlier had prepared him for the seminary in his native Manitowoc) and then the following year took over the two subcharges of the parish east of Hustisford."<sup>127</sup> Koehler concludes this section of his history by saying, "The five students remaining at the seminary stayed till March 1870, before entering the seminary at St. Louis, because a smallpox epidemic there also delayed the transfer" (emphasis added).<sup>128</sup> "Five students" is highlighted, because when one subtracts the seven assignees Koehler mentions (Zuberbier, Haack, Kleinhans, Jaeger, Denninger, Schimpf, and Dagefoerde) from the eleven students who started the year, only four remain (Haase, Hodtwalker, Althof, and Hoops). To make matters worse, however, Board of Trustees President Bading reported to the 1870 synod convention that "six of our theological students transferred to St. Louis, Missouri, in March of this year and entered there the practical seminary of the Missouri Synod in order to be trained for the holy ministry"<sup>129</sup> (emphasis added).

The confusion does not end there. In the 1903 seminary *Katalog*, for example, there is a "list of all those who studied in our seminary." The list begins in 1863 and ends in 1900. After each name, one finds the place(s) each pastor served and the year that service began. The name of H. Dagefoerde does not occur in this list.<sup>130</sup> In his annual report to the synod, however, Synod President Bading names "den Herrn Cand. Christoph Dageförde," and says that he passed his examination, was called by the congregation in North Leeds, and was installed on the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity.<sup>131</sup> (The proceedings from the 1871 convention do list Ch. Dageförde as the pastor from Leeds.<sup>132</sup>) In that same report, Bading also names Zuberbier, Haack, Kleinhans, Denninger, and Jäger, a total of six candidates who graduated and were called into the ministry. Bading does not, however, mention W. Schimpf in his report as synod president. Later, however, when Bading presents his report as president of the Board of Trustees, he says, "From the number of our theological students, six entered into work in the vineyard of the Lord in the course of the synodical year, (namely Mr. Zuberbier, Mr. Haack, Mr. Gustav Denninger, Mr. Conrad Jäger, Mr. H. Fr. Kleinhans, and Wm. Schimpf.)"<sup>133</sup> Curiously, President Bading mentions Schimpf in this report, but does not name Dageförde. When one puts all the sources together, it seems to be safe to say that seven men were graduated from the Watertown seminary in its final year and became pastors in the synod. This brings the Watertown seminary's total to twelve pastoral graduates.

The names of pastoral candidates were not, however, nearly the mess that the finances were. The finances had finally reached the crisis point. The December 1 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* contained the following announcement. "The

situation of our schools, namely, that which concerns the collegiate and theological part, has reached a state such that they urgently require a thorough and public discussion on the part of our pastors and congregations. Because the matter is of such far-reaching consequence and importance, that it surpasses the competence of the Board of Trustees and a delay until the next annual meeting of the synod cannot be justified by the board, it has urgently requested of me, through a proper resolution, to call together a special synod convention. After I also convinced myself of the need for such a meeting, I herewith ask all our pastors and congregational delegates to gather for such a synodical meeting in the church and congregation of Pastor Adelberg in Watertown on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1870."<sup>134</sup>

On Wednesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, the synod gathered at St. Mark's in Watertown for a special synod convention. The institutions were in a fiscal crisis. The operating debt stood at \$4,024, plus another \$4,500 which was coming due because of the purchase of land. The delegates passed a motion to raise around \$4,000 a year through free-will offerings to support the teachers. How exactly to do this they left to pastors and their congregations. The convention also authorized the board to arrange Prof. Hönecke's move to St. Louis shortly after Easter (Easter was on April 17<sup>th</sup> in 1870), and to pay for the costs. Professor Hönecke subsequently asked that he be relieved of his duties as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.<sup>135</sup> Subsequent editions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* do not, however, provide any indication that the financial support resolved by the special convention came pouring in.

In March of 1870, the Watertown seminary closed, and the training of future pastors for the Wisconsin Synod was transferred to the Missouri Synod seminary in St. Louis. Oddly, the closing of the Watertown seminary and its move to St. Louis does not appear to be reported anywhere in the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.

The next real mention of the Watertown seminary in the synod's official publication was in an open letter from President Bading to the pastors and congregations of the synod in the May 15, 1870, edition. It was unfortunately not good news that he wanted to share. He reminded the readers of the special January convention and of the delegates' decision to raise \$4,000 in free-will offerings. Then he continued,

The Board of Trustees got to work with new hope. The brothers have heard about our need,—they have promised us strong support—they will keep their word—fifty pastors and congregations need just a little seriousness and effort to make the necessary support a reality. But what happened? It looks as if people have consciously and intentionally said no with their actions to that to which their mouths said yes. Of the \$4,000 promised, in four months \$220 has been received. With this small amount, the Board of Trustees is supposed to pay the salaries of four professors, support a number of poor students, and purchase various items for managing the household affairs. With such a state of affairs, there is much to complain about and much to find fault with. For those who are entrusted with managing and providing for the institutions, it is honestly necessary to fight very hard, that a bitter root does not grow in the heart, when they see themselves so completely abandoned in their work by



the active participation and assistance of the pastors and congregations, when they must experience how laments and heartfelt requests in the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, presentation of our needs, and exhortation to help at synod conventions and special synod conventions fade away over the years without effect, how year after year, as a result of the almost universal failure to act, the schools walk step by step toward collapse. At present we have hardly one more step to take before we collapse completely. We are in the midst of it already. If the brothers in the ministry, if our dear congregations do not finally want to take the matter rightly to heart now, if they do not want to lend a hand of **immediate** help, **regular** help, **generous** help, if they instead want to let the schools fend for themselves, their doom is guaranteed, and the entire synod will have to bear the shame which is rightly theirs. The Board of Trustees will be compelled at the next synod convention to put back into the hands of the honorable synod its work and the keys to the schools, but it will do it with the acknowledgment, that we went under because of the heartlessness and inaction of our own members.<sup>136</sup>

On June 1, it was Professor Hönecke's turn. The lead article in the *Gemeinde-Blatt* was a lengthy article by the synod's theological professor and teacher, the only one like it from his pen. It too was addressed "to our pastors and congregations." Whereas Pastor Bading's letter had struck a rather negative tone, Professor Hönecke's remained positive throughout. After assuring the synod that President Bading had not been exaggerating, that things really were as bad as he had said, Professor Hönecke continued,

No, we do not need to think about the downfall of our schools because to be sure there is help for them. In keeping with God's kindness and goodness, the help has already been given, if we will only look at it aright. To have a cheerful, happy heart, to give, to help, that's what we need. And God will help us do it. In fact, he has already given everything so that we can have it, and that is why I say, the help has already been given, if we will only look at it aright. Do we not **have** the dear, precious, saving Word of our God and Savior? Do we not sincerely **want** that it be preached at all times richly and powerfully, not only to us, but also to our children, and further, to all who are now without the Word here in this, our new home? Behold, such having and wanting is from our Lord God and both are exceedingly powerful and effective to give us a cheerful heart so that we all help to maintain our schools with all our power. They shall serve above all to prepare such young men who someday, with God's help, want to be made competent for the proclamation and carrying out of the saving Gospel of our Savior. How are these two things supposed to go together, that one is happy about the Word, that one has God's grace, and is not happy, from the heart and gladly, to build and care for such schools, with all the gifts which God has given, to help keep them going, especially in times of need—schools which shall serve to prepare

preachers of the Word. One cannot do otherwise than to see such schools as worthy and good gifts of God. ... Note well, dear friends and brothers, how our faithful God in a truly kind and loving way, wants to help us Lutheran Christians in all sorts of ways to have a heart that is cheerful and inclined toward such schools which cultivate the languages and knowledge in a Christian manner and seek nothing other than to make all gifts of the Spirit serve the kingdom of God.<sup>137</sup>

We have not yet, however, finished the story of the Watertown seminary's professor, Adolf Hönecke. According to the agreement worked out the previous year, Wisconsin was to provide one seminary professor for St. Louis. In its special convention in January of 1870, synod had called Professor Hönecke, who was supposed to move to St. Louis at Easter. According to Koehler, "Prof. Hoenecke wavered until April about accepting the call to St. Louis. ... He did accept it because, as he explained to Bading in his letter (April 17, 1870), 'I would not like to expose myself to the charge sometime, when the structure of our institutions happens to collapse (of which I haven't the least doubt any more) that I especially contributed to that event by not going to St. Louis. It is a fact, however, that never in my life have I had to make such a distasteful decision as yielding in this matter.'" Koehler then comments, "Hoenecke's reluctance is explained further in the letter with what appears to be his fear that synod's leadership was undergoing a change and the complexion of the college management becoming too much Missouri."<sup>138</sup> However, Professor Hönecke subsequently changed his mind, instead accepting a call as pastor of St. Matthew's in Milwaukee.<sup>139</sup> Synod would have to decide at its June 1870 convention what it would do about this position of a theological professorship at the St. Louis seminary filled and funded by Wisconsin. The recommendation of the Board of Trustees was to delay filling the position indefinitely.<sup>140</sup> Though they would not be supplying a theological professor, they did still need to support the students there financially. "The entire cost of maintaining our students there had to be borne by the synod. The board had even decided to furnish bedding for our students at the St. Louis seminary."<sup>141</sup>

When the synod met in convention from June 16-22, 1870, once again synodical president Bading spoke passionately about the Watertown seminary, now just a memory. He first spoke to the delegates as their president. He briefly reviewed the entire history of the seminary, going all the way back to 1863. He recounted the school's continuous financial struggle to stay open, and ways God had blessed those efforts. He reminded delegates of the many past appeals for help and the frequent congregational promises to support the seminary. Then he continued,

Every financial report ended with a deficit, and five years ago already synod debated about a collector. That the continued existence of the institutions finally had to become unsure and questionable with ongoing experiences like this is understandable. Now the time has come when the synod has to

contemplate this matter more closely and may no longer fail to hear the laments made loudly every year. The governing board could well have administered the institutions in this same way for a few more years and kept the things going by taking out loans, except that it has a responsibility toward the professors we have engaged, toward the congregations, and toward the world not to. Right now we could still do right by everyone and end with honor, but after years this would no longer be possible with the continued inactivity of our pastors and congregations.

But how shall the need be relieved now, and the matter arranged, so that everything may continue in a better way? Should we let the college and *Gymnasium* go, and limit ourselves to a seminary? Or should reduction of the teaching staff, a decrease in subjects occur, and the goal of a classical education for our future preachers be made a lower priority? The synod can hardly want that. The circumstances of the church among our people and in our land have reached a stage which makes competent academic abilities necessary for the church. The times are disappearing more and more when congregations can be satisfied with untalented and ignorant emergency help. Even sects, which up to this point have not been inclined toward any academic training, now recognize the need for a classical education of their preachers for their existence and increase of their church bodies, and offer hundreds of thousands for the founding of schools of higher learning and seminaries. How is it supposed to be different with Lutheran Christians whose church has always been the refuge of noble arts, Christian education, and academics?

If these words of Luther<sup>142</sup> are spoken from our souls, how could we want to let the idea of a reduction in teaching staff, or of letting our *Gymnasium* go altogether, enter our mind even for a few moments. There is only one good way in this matter: that is greater sacrifice, a regular, organized habit of charity. Congregations are for the most part willing to do something, if only the pastors are ready to take up the matter with zeal, desire, and perseverance.<sup>143</sup>

But President Bading wasn't done yet. He later appeared before the convention as president of the Board of Trustees. This report he began with the words of 2 Corinthians 4:8, "We are worried, but not in despair." Then he continued,

Our institution is, in its present situation, like a ship on the sea which has sprung a leak, and can be kept afloat only with hardship and effort. We regret to have to say here that the honorable synod, in letting the necessary funding be lacking, has allowed our institution to get into this sad situation. We are worried that the ship will shortly sink into the depths, that we will have to discontinue the work in our institution, provided the necessary help is not

soon rendered. We are worried that the needed help will not come, or will come too late, because many pastors and congregations in our synod have up until now shown and indicated very little or no interest at all in the existence and blossoming of our institution. We are worried that we cannot captain and steer the ship of our institution much longer, for we openly admit, we have become fainthearted and are no longer about to be moved and encouraged any more by nice-sounding promises and resolutions of the synod to administer the matters of our institution.

Yet, although we are worried, and indeed must be worried, when we contemplate our incompetency for the work of the Lord and the sad lack of sacrificial love in the congregations of our synod, we still do not despair, when we look at the Lord, our faithful and gracious God. Indeed, it is his goodness, that things are not yet completely over for our institution, and his mercy has no end. . . Therefore we may not and do not want to despair of the goodness, mercy, and faithfulness of our God, but rather hope that he will rescue our school from its need and will also further crown the work done in it with his blessing. Indeed, it is a necessary work, and one commanded by the Lord, which we carry on in our school. It is indeed necessary, that our Lutheran Zion be built and that capable workers be trained for this work. How rarely they safeguard the precious jewel of the pure and saving teaching of the gospel for our children and descendants, and see to it that they do not lack messengers of peace. So will the faithful and gracious God turn the hearts in the synod more and more to his work and make them willing and cheerful in doing good and sharing.<sup>144</sup>

The financial report supported what President Bading had said. On June 1, 1870, the Watertown schools had an operating deficit of \$3,610.64. In addition to this deficit, there were also building and land purchase debts. Everything together totaled \$8,528.31, a small fortune for a small synod in 1870.

The discussion that followed does not seem to have been particularly pleasant. As delegates discussed how the schools had gotten into such dire financial straits, they left few without blame. "People believed to have to look for [the reason] partly in the existence of the troublesome scholarships, partly in the actions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, partly in the administration of the schools, partly in the lack of awareness about synod and about church things in general by the congregations." At this point, a delegation from Milwaukee read a document in which they proposed moving the schools from Watertown to Milwaukee. This proposal was then debated back and forth by each side. All sides "expressed most emphatically a willingness to preserve the schools from the collapse which threatened them."<sup>145</sup>

The discussion then turned to what synod was going to need to do financially in order to prevent the impending collapse of its worker-training system. The delegates first discussed how much money synod would need to raise annually to support the system. Initially, that number was \$7,000. Realizing that this was

unrealistic, the delegates discussed how they could reduce it. Eventually, they decided to do it "through a completely new management principle . . . which consists in this, that the synod would grant poor students only free tuition and free room; their personal costs (food, clothing, etc.) would be left to them." The delegates came to this decision after they understood that the operating deficit was in part due to the free board which had been provided to poor students. Other ways would have to be found to help poor students complete their studies.<sup>146</sup>

With that difficult decision behind them, they turned their attention to the remaining \$4,500. Delegates offered a number of wide-ranging alternatives, including reducing the number of teachers, closing the academy (the part of the system that prepared students for the *Gymnasium* or college), and selling the land for the purchase of which synod had incurred much of the current debt. In the end, they decided to raise the \$4,500. With that pledge the 1870 convention ended, and with it the Watertown seminary.

German has a saying: *aller Anfang ist schwer*. That was certainly true of the seminary in Watertown. It was seven-year battle to keep the school going. But it was a battle men like Johannes Bading were willing to fight, because for them, the battle wasn't just about a school. The battle was about the continued proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by pastors trained to preach it faithfully.

May God continue to grant us a seminary which trains such men and may he give us hearts glad and willing to support our seminary for as long as a gracious God allows it to remain.

### Endnotes

102. *Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 2, No. 4. Oktober 15, 1866, pp.1-2.
103. Frey comments, "The reasons for the decrease are not quite apparent. The transfer of some students to the St. Louis Seminary may have had something to do with it. Though there are no records on that, it is known, for instance, that the original student, Siegler, spent a year studying in St. Louis." (*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p. 6).
104. In his report to the 1867 Synod convention, A. Hönecke identified six students who had been prepared for the seminary: Dahlke, Denninger, Gamm, Bauernfeind, Hoyer, and Pankow. (*Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 34).
105. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, pp. 122, 123.
106. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 2, No. 3. Oktober 15 (1), 1866, p. 3.
107. *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 34.
108. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*. Jahrg. 2, No. 20. Juni 15, 1867, p. 4.
109. *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 16-17.
110. The reference is to the Seven Weeks War or Austro-Prussian War in the summer of 1866.

111. *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 5.
112. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 2. Sept 15, 1867, p. 4.
113. *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 6-7.
114. In his history of the seminary, Hönecke has, "According to the president's report for the year June 1867 to June 1868, twenty young people were preparing themselves at the school to enter college. Among the eight new enrollees were A. Schroedel and C. Oppen. One seminary student was readmitted. Two students, L. Junker and C. Dowidat, were given permission to take their examinations." (p. 2)
115. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 3. Oktober 1, 1867, p. 2.
116. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 4. Oktober 15, 1867, p. 1.
117. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 12. April 15, 1867, p. 4.
118. *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 6-7.
119. *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 25.
120. *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 30.
121. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahr. 4, No. 18, Mai 15, 1869, p. 4.
122. *Verhandlungen der 19. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 25.
123. *Verhandlungen der 19. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 11-14.
124. *Verhandlungen der 19. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 21-23, 27.
125. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.
126. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.
127. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.
128. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.
129. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.25.
130. *1903 Katalog*, pp. 14-25.
131. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.8.
132. *Verhandlungen der 21. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.2.
133. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.26.
134. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 7, Dezbr. 1, 1869, p. 1.

135. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 11, Februar 1, 1870, p. 1.
136. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 18, Mai 15, 1870, p. 1.
137. *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 19, Juni 1, 1870, p. 1.
138. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.
139. The last word on this matter came in 1871. Koehler reports, "Hoenecke had again been called in 1871 to go to St. Louis but now, after apparently futile Synod dealings with his congregation, definitely declined the call." *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 135.
140. *Verhandlungen der 20. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 25-28.
141. Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, pp. 59-60.
142. The words to which Bading refers are these: How appropriately Dr. Luther lets himself be heard about the value and need for scholarly schools for the church. In "Concerning the Schools," he says, "I have written much that one hold to it firmly and zealously. Although that boys learn languages and the liberal arts is viewed as heathen and an outward thing, they are highly necessary for the church. For where one does not train students, we will not have pastors and preachers for long, for the school must give to the church people whom one can make apostles, evangelists, prophets, that is, preachers, pastors, rulers. Yes, you say, although one might have to have schools, what use is it to teach the Greek and Hebrew languages? Couldn't we just teach German, the Bible, and God's Word, which is sufficient for salvation? Answer: Let it be said to us, that we will indeed not retain the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which is the sword of the Spirit. They are the cabinet in which one keeps this treasure. Where we despise it and let the languages go, we will lose the Gospel. As dearly as we love the Gospel, let us be just as stubborn about the languages. It was not for nothing that God let his Scripture be written in just the two languages, the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New in Greek. What God does not despise, but rather has chosen for his Word above all others, that we should also honor above all others."
143. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, pp. 11-13.
144. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, pp. 24-28.
145. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p. 29.
146. *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, pp. 29-30.

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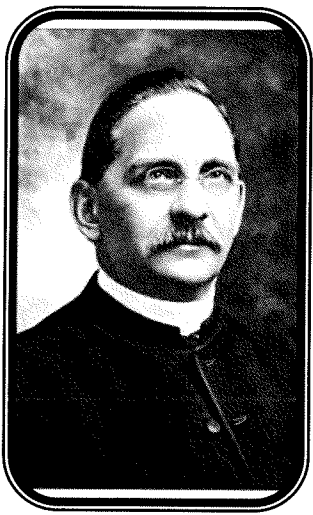
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## Historical Brief: A Schaller Discovery

Pastor Jeremiah J. Gumm

“His end was Christian and comforting, but it overwhelmed us all to such an extent that we still have not fully grasped what has happened to us.”<sup>1</sup> It was February 1920. An influenza epidemic was ravaging the Milwaukee area, and the Wisconsin Synod’s seminary family was in a state of shock. In less than 48 hours, their beloved Director, Professor John Schaller, had succumbed to what was diagnosed as influenza. The man described as “the heart and soul of the seminary” had entered eternal glory leaving behind a grieving family, faculty, and student body.



Professor John Schaller

From early on, Schaller had always exhibited robust health and a tireless energy wherever and however he served. He had served as a *Reiseprediger* (traveling missionary) near Little Rock, Arkansas, in the earliest years of his ministry.<sup>2</sup> He had spent twenty years serving at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm as professor of theology and later as director. Family accounts describe how Schaller loved to spend time outdoors with his children. The same was true of his twelve years on the Wauwatosa campus, where he not only served as director of the Seminary, but also played a major role in intersynodical discussions in the Synodical Conference. Illness and disease were very uncommon in the Schaller home, so his death at the age of 60 was completely unexpected.

It should be noted that John Schaller loved to smoke his pipe—a habit he developed during his school years in Watertown and St. Louis. In fact, visiting a local tobacco shop in Alexandria, Virginia, in

1880 was how young Schaller met his future wife—the tobacco shop owner’s stepdaughter. Nearly 95 years later, we can only speculate about the condition of Schaller’s lungs when he visited his quarantined students in 1920, but perhaps it was a contributing factor to his death.

When the epidemic struck the Wauwatosa campus, a number of students did fall ill with what was diagnosed as influenza. They were typically quarantined in a large attic room of the seminary building. In spite of the contagious nature of this disease, Schaller saw no need to withhold pastoral care from his ailing students. Smoking his pipe and wearing his Prince Albert coat, Prof. Schaller would personally bring each student words of comfort and strength from Holy Scripture. In the week prior to his death, Schaller had visited a student named Frederick Brandt, who not only survived the influenza, but went on to serve faithfully for many years as a WELS pastor. In his retirement, Brandt recounted how Prof. Schaller had comforted

him with words of Scripture and then said good night. By the end of the week, Schaller was dead.<sup>3</sup>

Schaller’s sudden death sent shockwaves throughout the Synodical Conference. Reading through early reports from February 1920 in *Gemeinde-Blatt* and Missouri’s *Der Lutheraner*, as well as later obituaries, one quickly gets the impression how much of a shock Schaller’s death was to so many people not only at the seminary, but throughout the Wisconsin Synod and the broader Synodical Conference. Highly emotional comments like “How is this possible? We just saw him at conference!” or “We have lost so much!” or “We have been severely afflicted by the Lord” are not unusual in these early reports of Schaller’s death. With Schaller gone, the seminary would never be the same and that loss would have a great impact on the synod for decades after.<sup>4</sup>

Prof. August Pieper’s eloquent obituary in April 1920 reveals that their grief-stricken shock still lingered months after the event. Prof. Schaller had been a beloved father figure and pastor for the students and the faculty. Pieper recounts how Schaller made sure to comfort and encourage his family and colleagues even as his own life was coming to an end.

Upon Schaller’s death, his grieving family asked the three surviving professors—J.P. Koehler, Herman Meyer, and Pieper—to take on the heavy task of overseeing the funeral services for their beloved colleague. Koehler ministered to the family at home. Meyer presided over the funeral service at Grace Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, and Pieper preached on John 5:35—“He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light.”

Schaller’s colleagues were also charged with reporting his death to the synod as a whole—Pieper writing in the April 1920 *Theologische Quartalschrift* and Meyer providing a German obituary in *Gemeinde-Blatt* and an English obituary in *The Northwestern Lutheran* in late February 1920. Not surprisingly these obituaries were written with strong emotion and love for their colleague. In the midst of all this grief, however, Prof. Meyer made a mistake.<sup>5</sup>

It was a minor, almost unnoticeable mistake—a chronological mistake in both of his biographies of Director Schaller, but one that would be repeated by other venerable sources over the next 93 years. In recounting Schaller’s schooling at Watertown and St. Louis, Meyer stated that John Schaller had graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1881, being assigned to serve as a bilingual<sup>6</sup> *Reiseprediger* in Little Rock. Unfortunately, that was not true. Yes, Schaller did graduate from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and did enter the public ministry as a bilingual *Reiseprediger* in Little Rock, but he did not graduate in 1881.

Schaller was supposed to have graduated that year, but Meyer neglected one important detail when compiling Schaller’s biography. After his second year at St. Louis, C.F.W. Walther had personally recommended John Schaller to serve a one-year resident vicarage<sup>7</sup> at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1880-81, when they had requested a bilingual pastor to serve them. After that year, Schaller had to complete his third and final year at St. Louis. That year in Virginia was also important, because Schaller met his future wife there—Miss Emma

Sophia Mumm. Perhaps forgetting that “emergency call” year or simply being unaware of it is the reason that Meyer also moved John and Emma’s wedding date from 1883 to 1882.

Meyer’s error is not found in Missouri Synod sources from that time. The announcement of Schaller’s death in the 24 February 1920 issue of *Der Lutheraner*—the Missouri Synod newspaper—indicates that he entered the pastoral ministry in 1882, which was consistent with *Der Lutheraner’s* announcement of his ordination on 23 July 1882 at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in St. Louis, from which he then began serving in Little Rock.<sup>8</sup>

While their wedding date was corrected in later Schaller biographies, the year that he entered the ministry was not. A search through biographical sketches, vignettes, and encyclopedic entries for John Schaller over the next 93 years shows them stating that he graduated from St. Louis in 1881. Some also provide an 1882 date for his ordination. Some indicate no year at all when he graduated or was ordained.<sup>9</sup> Those that are aware of his “emergency call” year in 1880-1881 attempt to reconcile the confused dates. In these cases those who make the attempt generally give the impression that Schaller simply graduated from St. Louis without finishing his final year there and then began serving as a *Reiseprediger* in Little Rock right away.<sup>10</sup>

To give the reader an idea of how this error was compounded over the 90+ years that followed Schaller’s death, consider the following listing of venerable sources that have incorrectly cited Schaller’s graduation date:

- 1920 – Meyer’s obituaries in *Gemeinde-Blatt* and *The Northwestern Lutheran*
- 1925 – Prof. Joh. Ph. Koehler’s *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*<sup>11</sup>
- 1927 – *Concordia Cyclopedia* (incl. revisions in 1954 and 1975<sup>12</sup>)
- 1988 – Prof. Martin Westerhaus’ “The Wauwatosa Theology: The Men and Their Message” (included in Volume 1 of *The Wauwatosa Theology*, published in 1997)<sup>13</sup>
- 1992 – Prof. Edward Fredrich’s *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans: History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger*<sup>14</sup>
- 2012 – Dr. Joel Pless’ “A Big Sister Helping Out a Little Sister: The St. Louis Years of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1870-1878” in the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*<sup>15</sup>

The 1881 graduation date was generally assumed until Spring 2013, when Meyer’s mistake was finally discovered. As this writer conducted research for John Schaller’s biographical vignette in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, the confusion surrounding the years 1872-1883 in Schaller’s life became quite obvious.

Research conducted through Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) revealed Schaller’s ordination date to be 23 July 1882. A congregational history from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alexandria, VA confirmed his year of resident vicarage as 1880-81. Immanuel also provided a scanned copy of the recorded entry for John and Emma’s wedding with the date 19 September 1883. This was confirmed by Schaller family genealogical records. Schaller’s close friendship with his known classmate Carl Gausewitz, as noted in Koehler’s *History*, as well as his age confirmed that Schaller started Northwestern College in 1872.<sup>16</sup>

However, at the time of the writing of the vignette, there was still nothing conclusive regarding when John Schaller actually graduated from the Seminary in St. Louis. Questions remained. Did Schaller graduate immediately after that vicarage year in Virginia? Did he finish out a third year at St. Louis? If he did, did he leave Northwestern a year early? Why was he ordained in 1882 if he graduated in 1881? If Schaller did graduate in 1881, where is he in the graduation picture?

In March 2013, this writer began a series of e-mail discussions with Dr. Joel Pless regarding this uncertain graduation date and the questions surrounding it. These discussions eventually led to further research with CHI and the WLS Library Staff, both of which deserve many thanks for their research on this writer’s behalf. Concordia Seminary student lists from the 1879-1882 catalogs clearly indicate that J. Schaller was absent in 1880-81 and in *Klasse 1* in the 1881-82 school year. He is also not listed among those pictured with the graduating class of 1881. *Der Lutheraner’s* announcement of Schaller’s ordination and the beginning of his ministry in Little Rock clearly indicate that he started in 1882, as do the proceedings of the Missouri Synod’s Western District convention from late 1882.<sup>17</sup> *Der Lutheraner’s* 1920 announcement of his death confirms that he entered the ministry in 1882. On the basis of this further research, we can conclude that John Schaller did indeed enter the pastoral ministry in 1882.

In the entire scheme of WELS and American Lutheran history, the exact date of John Schaller’s entrance into the pastoral ministry is an admittedly minor detail. However, what the Lord accomplished for his church through this faithful *Seelsorger* during his pastoral ministry is of great importance. In spite of his chronological error, Herman Meyer gives us a clear glimpse at what our synod lost with Schaller’s death and lessons we can learn even today.

The loss thus sustained by our synod, as well as by the church at large, is indeed great. Professor Schaller was a theologian of more than ordinary ability and attainments. Naturally gifted with a clear intellect, a master of both the German and the English idiom, a rare teacher, a scholar applying himself to his studies with untiring diligence, he rendered eminent service in the spreading of a clear understanding of scriptural doctrine in our circles. And, what was best in his theology, it was thoroughly scriptural, evangelical to the core, avoiding the vagaries to which the human mind is so prone. Not only were his students benefited, but his influence was also widely felt. But best of all, by the grace of God, he had a firm Christian character, as could clearly be seen when he was on his death-bed and was informed that he had but a few hours to live. There was neither anxiety nor fear, but

a placid willingness to return to his Heavenly Father.

We have lost much. May this death teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. And may the Lord, who has smitten us, again satisfy us with His mercy. To him be glory forever and ever.

### Endnotes

1. August Pieper. "Professor Johannes Schaller", *Theologische Quartalschrift* (Vol. 17, No. 2 – April 1920), 97. Translation is the author's. Prof. Pieper's original German: *War so sein Ende christlich und tröstlich, so übernahm es doch uns alle dermaßen, daß wir sobald noch garnicht ermaßen, was uns geschehen war.*
2. After his first year of service in Arkansas, he had established three congregations and was serving twelve other preaching stations and congregations – *Der Lutheraner* Vol. 39 (August 15, 1883), 123.
3. Details from this paragraph were supplied to this writer by Dr. Joel Pless, who interviewed Rev. Em. Brandt during the 1984-85 school year. Pastor Brandt confided that for his entire life he lived with the thought that Schaller may have gotten fatally ill from visiting him in the infirmary at the Wauwatosa seminary.
4. For "the rest of the story", check out *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*.
5. Sadly Prof. Meyer would himself succumb to pneumonia only a couple months after Schaller in April 1920.
6. German and English – Schaller was well-known during his seminary years for his fluency in both German and English, an uncommon skill among German Lutherans of his day.
7. Essentially what we would consider today to be an "emergency call".
8. *Der Lutheraner's* announcement informs the reader that Schaller's father—Prof. Gottlieb Schaller, who also served as president of Missouri's Western District—ordained him with assistance from C.F.W. Walther and Georg Stöckhardt. For those who are familiar with the latter two individuals, that would have been quite the historic ordination picture!
9. Including Prof. Morton A. Schroeder's *A Time to Remember: An Informal History of Dr. Martin Luther College 1884-1984* and Rev. Loren Schaller's "Foreword" in the 1981 edition of his grandfather's *Biblical Christology: A Study in Lutheran Dogmatics*.
10. Koehler in his *History* seems to give the impression that Schaller left Northwestern a year early (224), but based on Concordia Seminary catalog information from 1880-1882, there is no reason to think that Schaller did that.
11. John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod (Second Edition)*. ed. Leigh D. Jordahl. (Mosinee, Wisconsin: The Protestant Conference, 1981) 224.
12. *Lutheran Cyclopedia*. ed. Erwin L. Lueker. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975) 697. The incorrect date can also be found on the digital version of the *Christian Cyclopedia* (<http://cyclopedia.lcms.org>).

13. Martin O. Westerhaus, "The Wauwatosa Theology: The Men and Their Message". *The Wauwatosa Theology, Volume I*. ed. Curtis A. Jahn. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997) 66.
14. Edward C. Fredrich. *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans: History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992) 114.
15. Joel L. Pless, "A Big Sister Helping Out a Little Sister: The St. Louis Years of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1870-1878". *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring 2012) 2-21.
16. Koehler 224. Schaller was born on 10 December 1859.
17. *Vierundzwanzigster Synodal-Bericht des Westlichen Distrikts der deutschen evang.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten*, 14.
18. Herman Meyer, "Professor John Schaller", *The Northwestern Lutheran*. Vol. 7, No. 4 (22 February 1920) 49-50.

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## Looking Back

John M. Brenner

### 25 years ago – 1989

- The Lutheran Church—Canada becomes an independent church body. It consists of the former Canadian districts of the Missouri Synod.
- The WELS Mission Vision 2000+ sets a goal of 300 new mission openings by 2000 and a goal of 70 pastor graduates and 140 teacher graduates per year by 2000.
- The Report of the Preparatory School Study Commission to the WELS Board for Worker Training makes three recommendations:
  - Preserve the preparatory school system in some form.
  - Modify the preparatory school system by amalgamating MLPS and NPS on the Watertown campus which necessitates amalgamation of NWC and DMLC on the New Ulm campus.
  - Implement ways for the synod's constituency, in particular the area Lutheran high schools, to strengthen their resolve and capability to increase the number of worker training students drawn from area Lutheran and public high schools.
- The WELS Board for Home Missions authorizes "a task force to develop a philosophy of ministry which will include a statement of purpose, objectives and evaluation guidelines for multi-cultural ministry as we seek to aggressively address the opportunities God gives to serve as Christ's ambassadors cross-culturally in the United States and Canada."
- The WELS Board for Home Missions reports 13 new exploratory mission starts in 1987-88.
- The WELS Board for World Missions reports the following world mission statistics for 1988: 2,437 children baptized, 1,165 adults baptized, 490 children confirmed, and 1,669 adults confirmed. The mission in Malawi leads the way with 1,573 children baptized, 665 adults baptized, 347 children confirmed, and 1,161 adults confirmed

### 50 years ago – 1964

- The Wisconsin Synod's Administration Building on North Ave. in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is dedicated on May 3. The building is a refurbished bank building close to the old Northwestern Publishing House building.
- Wisconsin Synod President, O.J. Naumann, World Mission executive Secretary Edgar Hoenecke, and Pastor Leonard Koening of the Committee on Relief meet with Pastor Peter Chang and agree to supply limited support to the Chinese Lutheran Christian Mission.
- Professor Conrad Frey, president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, receives a year's leave of absence to serve as resident seminary advisor for the Chinese Lutheran Christian Mission.
- On April 27 Pastor Martinus Adam organizes the Confessional Lutheran Church of Indonesia in Sukabumi, Java. In 1969 the Wisconsin Synod declares fellowship with this church body and resolves to assist in its work.
- The Wisconsin Synod's Lutheran Collegians organization is founded in Milwaukee on May 18.
- The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society is founded in Winona, Minnesota, on June 27.
- The National Evangelical Lutheran Church (Finnish) merges with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
- The Lutheran Churches of the Reformation (LCR) is organized at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Chicago by congregations that withdrew from the LCMS.
- The Lutheran Bible Institute of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa begins in Chelston, near Lusaka, with eight students.
- Missioners Rupert Eggert and Roger Sprain arrive in San Juan, Puerto Rico, later beginning mission work in Guayama and Humacao.

### 75 years ago – 1939

- Seminarian Ernst H. Wendland returns to the U.S. in August after a year of study at the seminary of the Saxon Free Church in Berlin-Zehlendorf in Germany just prior to the outbreak of World War II. Wendland will later serve as a WELS missionary to Africa and professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.
- Germany attacks Poland on September 1, beginning World War II. Pastor William Bodamer, Wisconsin Synod missionary in the Free Church in Poland, is refused a visa to re-enter the country. Contact is lost with the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Poland. In 1939 the mission numbers 12 congregations, 14 preaching stations, almost 5,000 souls, nearly 2,000 communicants, and 10 church buildings. Pastor Maliszewski continues to serve the Poles who flee to

Germany. In spite of the Nazi's anti-church policy the mission's "responsibility list" by 1945 grows to 8,000 souls.

- A new mission strategy adopted by the Wisconsin Synod General Mission Board results in the calling of Pastor Im. P. Frey to be general missionary to Colorado and Pastor F. Stern to be general missionary to Arizona.
- Wisconsin Synod President John W.O. Brenner reports to the synod in convention that there is a shortage of male teachers but 50 candidates for the pastoral ministry still await assignment.
- The seminary in Thiensville reports a student body of 64 including 20 seniors, 22 middlers and 22 juniors.
- The Wisconsin Synod's Board of Trustees reports that the synod debt now totals \$320,799.04, down from \$611,525.65 in 1937.
- The Wisconsin Synod committee appointed to study the Missouri Synod's agreement with the American Lutheran Church that Missouri's Brief Statement together with the Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church serve as a sufficient doctrinal basis for church fellowship reports these findings: "The doctrinal basis established by the Missouri Synod and by the American Lutheran Church . . . is not acceptable. Not two statements should be issued as a basis for agreement; a single joint statement, covering the contested doctrines thetically and antithetically and accepted by both parties to the controversy, is imperative; and, furthermore, such doctrinal statement must be made in clear and unequivocal terms which do not require laborious additional explanations. The sincerity of any theoretical statement must also be evidenced by a clean church practice."

#### 100 years ago – 1914

- The Wisconsin Synod founds its first English periodical, *The Northwestern Lutheran*. The first issue appears on January 7. Pastors Fred Graeber, John Jenny, Hans Kollar Moussa, and John W.O. Brenner serve as the editorial committee.
- Representatives of the Missouri Synod and the faculty of Wisconsin's Wauwatosa seminary discuss the various issues concerning the doctrine of the church and ministry at the meeting of the Synodical Conference in Milwaukee.
- The first baptism by a Missouri Synod missionary in China takes place.

#### 125 years ago – 1889

- John Bading retires as president of the Wisconsin Synod. Philip von Rohr is elected in his place. Bading served the synod as president 1860-63, 1867-89 and helped move the synod to a solidly confessional Lutheran stance.

- Pastor John Schaller of Little Rock, Arkansas, a graduate of the Wisconsin Synod's Northwestern College and a son of a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, joins the growing faculty at the Minnesota Synod's school in New Ulm.
- Representatives of the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod meet at St. Johns in Milwaukee to plan a campaign against the Bennett Law. The provisions of the bill that are cited as causing real difficulties for Lutheran congregations are the requirement that reading, writing, arithmetic, and U.S. history be taught in the English language, and that students are required to go a school in their public school district. Since a Lutheran school might have children coming from various geographical districts, the law could cause real difficulties or put parochial schools out of business. Lutherans and German Catholics organize politically to defeat an incumbent governor and succeed in having the law repealed. J.P. Koehler in his *History of the Wisconsin Synod* suggests that the synodical administration may have become a bit too political. At the time he fears dragging the synod's name through the mud by a political campaign.
- Anna Bernardine Dorothy Hoppe, hymnist and hymn translator, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on May 7. She was a frequent contributor of poems to the Wisconsin Synod's *Northwestern Lutheran*. She died on August 2, 1941. She published 200 texts in *Songs of the Church Year: Hymns on the Gospel and Epistle Texts and Other Songs* (1928). In 1925 the Augustana Synod chose 23 of her hymns to appear in *The Hymnal*. Two of her hymns were included in *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941. Her hymn "Rise, Arise" is in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*.
- The Alpha Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Freedmen in America is organized by four pastors of North Carolina Synod (David Koonts, president; W. Philo Phifer, secretary; Sam Holt; and Nathan Clapp). When their leader (Koonts) dies in 1890, the remaining three pastors appeal to President H. C. Schwan of the Missouri Synod for assistance. The result was that the Lutheran Synodical Conference took up the work among African Americans in North Carolina beginning in 1891.
- Students John Plocher, George Adaschek, and Paul Mayerhoff are enlisted as trainees for future Wisconsin Synod "heathen" mission work. Plocher and Adaschek will begin their work among the Apaches at Peridot on the San Carlos Reservation in 1893. Mayerhoff will begin work at East Fork on the Fort Apache Reservation in 1896.

#### 150 years ago – 1864

- The Langenberg Mission Society expresses "grave concern" over the Wisconsin Synod's increasingly confessional position.

- Acting President Reim is elected president of the synod in place of President John Bading who is finishing up his fundraising in Europe.
- Ground is broken on July 22 for the first building on the newly purchased Watertown campus. John Richards, who lived in the Octagon House, sold the synod five acres for \$600.
- The seminary in Watertown has eleven students enrolled.
- John Bading returns in October from his fund-raising trip to Germany and Russia to secure financial resources for the newly established seminary in Watertown, Wisconsin
- Richard C. H. Lenski is born in Greifenberg, Prussia, Germany, on September 14 (d. 14 August 1936).
- The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia opens on October 5 as a response to the "American Lutheran" theology of Gettysburg Seminary. Among the professors at Philadelphia is the confessional Lutheran leader, Charles Porterfield Krauth.
- On December 28 the Missouri Synod dedicates a teachers' college in Addison, Illinois. The college was later moved to River Forest, Illinois.

#### 175 years ago – 1839

- 700 German Lutherans arrive in Perry County and St. Louis, Missouri. The group is made up of a remarkably large number of professionals (Lutheran pastors and students, doctors, lawyers, and the like) hardly suited to frontier life. Aboard ship, they had made pastor Martin Stephan their bishop and had given him control over their financial and even political affairs. The group builds a log cabin seminary in Perry County, Missouri. These Saxon immigrants will be among the founders of the Missouri Synod. The log cabin seminary in Perry County eventually becomes Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.
- Pastor John Grabau leads a group of Lutherans from Prussia to America in protest of the Prussian Union. Grabau and most of the immigrants settle in Buffalo, New York. Another group settles near Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1845 these immigrants found "The Synod of the Lutheran Church emigrated from Prussia" better known as the Buffalo Synod.
- Johann Heinrich Sieker, is born in Schweinfurth, Bavaria, Germany on October 23 (died 30 December 1904). Sieker was trained at Gettysburg Seminary for the Wisconsin Synod and served as a pastor in Wisconsin before accepting a call to Minnesota where he was elected president of the Minnesota Synod. He accepted a call to St. Matthew's in New York and succeeded in bringing that congregation into the Missouri Synod and Synodical Conference. He was also a founder of Concordia College (Bronxville, New York).

#### 200 years ago -- 1814

- It is estimated that there are 85 Lutheran ministers and 380 Lutheran congregations in America.

The WELS Historical Institute was given formal approval by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) in convention in 1981 to organize for the purpose of collecting and preserving historical data and artifacts that are related to the various periods of Lutheranism in America, especially of the WELS. In recent years the synod took over the responsibility of maintaining the archives. The Institute maintains a museum and publishes a *JOURNAL* and *NEWSLETTER*. Membership is open. Fees are as follows, which include the subscription fees: Individual: \$20.00; Husband/Wife: \$25.00 (2 votes but only one publication issue); Congregation, School, Library, Corporation: \$40.00; and Student: \$15.00. Fees may be sent to the WELS Historical Institute, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222.

The board members are: Prof. Robert Bock, president; Daniel Nommensen, vice-president; Naomi Plocher, secretary; Duane Kuehl, treasurer; Prof. Joel Pless, Steven Miller, Prof. James Korthals, Rev. Joel Leyrer, Prof. Aaron Palmer, Rev. David Dolan, Mr. Kenneth Artlip, and Mr. Carl Nolte. Advisory members are: Prof. John Hartwig, Prof. John M. Brenner, and Charlotte Sampe, designer and museum curator.

**For membership information contact:**

Mr. Carl Nolte  
(414) 615-5705 • noltec@nph.wels.net

**Correspondence may be sent to the editor:**

Professor John M. Brenner  
11844 N. Luther Lane • Mequon, WI 53092  
(414) 242 - 8138 • Email: brennerj@wls.wels.net