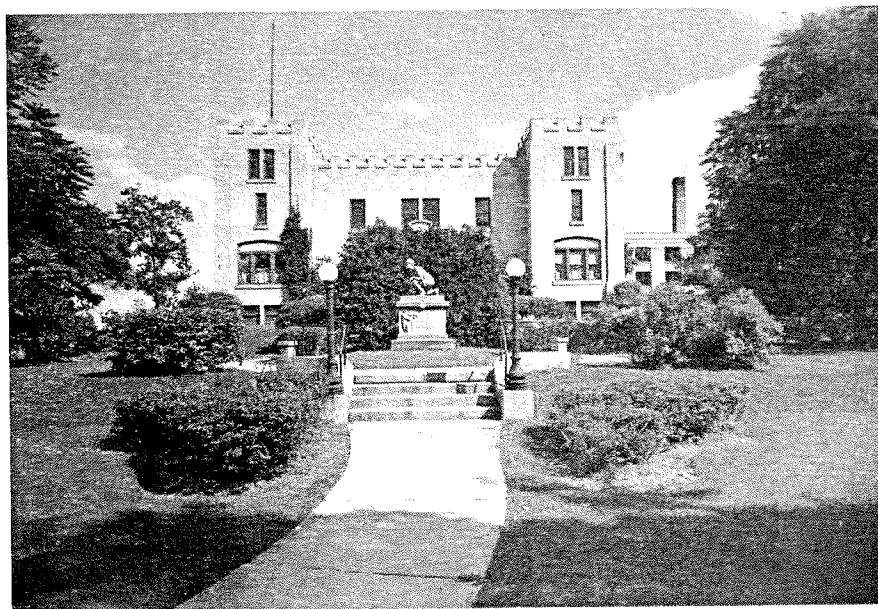


WELS Historical Institute

# Journal

Volume 30, Number 2

Fall 2012



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A Celebration of the Building of the New Gymnasium for  
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Editor: John M. Brenner

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Cover picture  
Northwestern College Gymnasium

**One Hundred Years of God's Grace:  
A Celebration of the Building of the New Gymnasium  
for Northwestern College  
Watertown, WI  
1912-2012**

by James R. Moeller

This article is dedicated to the memory of  
Pastor Robert J. Voss  
President of Northwestern College from 1987 – 1993  
Pastor, scholar, educator, friend, and a strong supporter of WELS missions  
and ministerial education  
"Hail to Thee, Northwestern!"

**Centennial of the Northwestern College Gymnasium**

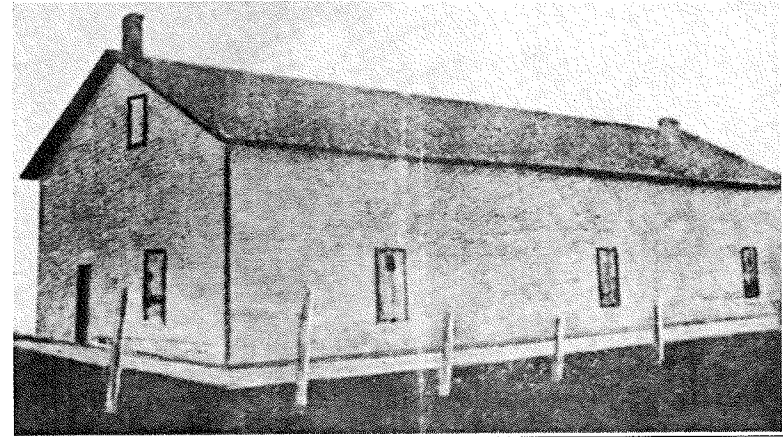
On Sunday evening, May 13, 2012, the annual spring band concert was held at Luther Preparatory School. That evening the concert honored the one hundredth anniversary of the Luther Preparatory School (LPS) Music Auditorium which had been the Northwestern College Auditorium, and a structure that had been originally built as the Northwestern College Gymnasium. The time had come to celebrate the centennial of a grand building.

While the LPS Music Auditorium is not the oldest ministerial education building in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) – Old Main on the New Ulm campus built in 1884 holds the record – this building is one rich in history and tradition. And what a history it is! We give thanks to God for one hundred years of his grace for the activities in this building that furthered the students of Northwestern College, Northwestern Preparatory School, Luther Preparatory School, and the Wisconsin Synod!

**The Old Shack**

In 1865 Northwestern College (NWC) was founded in Watertown, Wisconsin. The original building and the subsequent building of dormitories and service buildings provided for the spiritual, academic, and physical needs of the students. What was missing was a gymnasium, and no one knew that better than the students.

President E.E. Kowalke, in his volume on the centennial of Northwestern College entitled *Centennial Story*, provides historical background to the campus' first gymnasium which over time was simply called the "Old Shack." The students of Northwestern College decided to organize a Society for Gymnastic



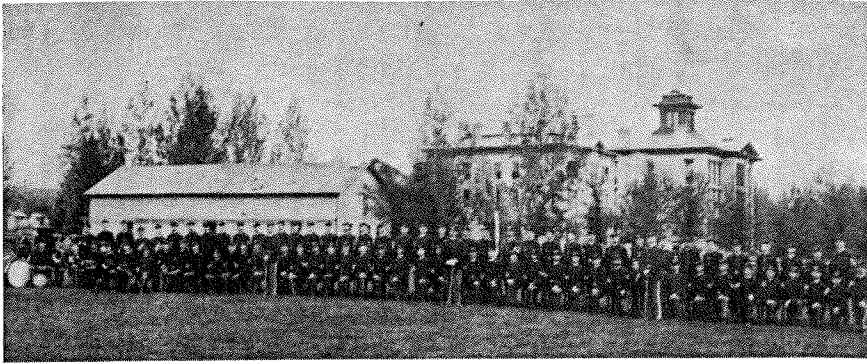
*The Old Shack*

Exercises. The society was founded on October 13, 1877. Oscar Griebing (NWC Class of 1878) was selected as its first president. The first order of business was to find a place where the society could practice their gymnastic exercises. It was decided to build a *Turnhalle*; however, the students themselves would have to bear the cost of construction. A site was jointly determined by a committee from the NWC faculty and the students. The building was constructed on the portion of land that today lies between the heating plant and the north end of Wittenberg Hall.

Once the idea was established the society moved quickly. Wood was ordered from a local lumberyard for the structure and arrived on October 15. On October 16 at 8:30 am the carpenters, who were mostly students themselves, began work on the building. Construction was finished on November 16, 1877, except for the floor and chimney. The keys were turned over to Mr. Griebing at 12 noon. The next day the chimney was built while students hauled in dirt for the floor and tamped it down. This was hard work, and Oscar Griebing recorded in his diary that by the time the work was finished "we were all quite 'kaput'." The Society for Gymnastic Exercises had its hall!

Originally the building measured 30 feet by 40 feet. In 1883 the NWC class of 1885 enlarged it to 30 feet by 70 feet. By doing so the building could then be used for both gymnastics and military drill. Northwestern College had its own military company, described as the envy of surrounding communities and the pride of Watertown. Dr. August Ernst, president of the college, was all in favor of gymnastics and military drill as forms of exercise. However, he had little sympathy for baseball and football.

Over time improvements were made to the Old Shack, but not many. A wood floor eventually replaced the dirt floor. Interior boards were placed on the walls to cover the supporting wall studs and provide a bit more insulation. Gymnastic equipment was purchased in the form of a ladder, a pair of rings



Picture taken May 30, 1892, shows 14 members of the band and 71 members of the military company. The captain in the center is August Schauer who founded the company in 1892. Building at the right is the "Kaffeemuehle;" the one in the center is the 1875 dorm; at the left is the gym, later called the "Old Shack." At extreme left are the institution's two chalets. Just above the dorm to the left of the "Kaffeemuehle" is the top of the windmill that stood over the well until 1907.

hanging from the ceiling, a leather-covered horse, parallel bars, and a horizontal bar.

For the next thirty-four years the Old Shack would be the scene of graduations and concerts, military drills and gymnastics presentations. Ultimately it was one place for the young men of the institution to burn off some energy, especially during the winter months. For a year after the original recitation building burned to the ground from a lightning strike in 1894, the Old Shack served as a dormitory for 100 students. By 1905 the building had greatly deteriorated. Since the Joint Synod had just spent \$50,000 on an additional dormitory for the college, the college board was not eager to ask the Joint Synod to spend valuable funds on a new gymnasium.

### The Northwestern Club

In 1907 the seed of the idea of pursuing a new gymnasium for Northwestern College was planted. Otto Ernst was the son of President August Ernst of NWC and a respected citizen and businessman in Milwaukee. At that time the school was known as Northwestern University. Mr. Ernst wanted to promote it. The College Board had other ideas on the course of the institution by changing the name to Northwestern College. Mr. Ernst had even more ideas.

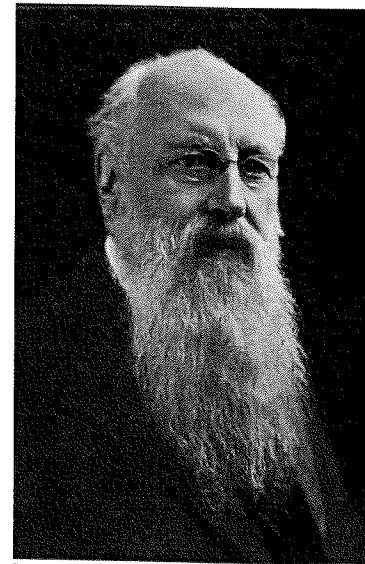
While a Northwestern Alumni Society already existed, it was Mr. Ernst's idea to form a club of former students of Northwestern who lived in the Milwaukee area. Inviting as many of the old scholars as possible, Ernst called for an initial meeting to be held on May 21, 1907, at the Blatz Hotel in Milwau-

kee. The meeting was a huge success in attendance and enthusiasm. Officers were elected and the Northwestern Club of Milwaukee was up and running.

The first year of the Northwestern Club was spent in getting the organization established and reestablishing old bonds and building new ties. To further the cause the club invited as many of the NWC faculty as possible to attend the "Smokers" as a group. The meetings were given this name because of the fine cigars and "liquid refreshment" that were a part of each gathering. Today we would call these gatherings a *gemuetlicher Abend* – a social gathering of friends to have a good time.

The following year the Northwestern Club showed even greater pride in their school. The club arranged an annual Memorial Day excursion to Watertown. On those days special excursion trains were run from Milwaukee. Upon arriving in Watertown at the Fifth Street depot the members of the club would walk up Western Avenue escorted by the Northwestern Band and the Military Company. NWC graduates, their wives, and families would tour the campus grounds that day, watch any number of student exhibitions and events, and renew friendships with former classmates.

That year the Northwestern Club also promoted the college by making arrangements for the NWC band, orchestra, and choirs to come and present at some of the best concert venues in Milwaukee – the Alhambra and Davidson theaters. Music reviewers of the local Milwaukee papers remarked that these concerts were "something to be proud of."



Pastor Philipp von Rohr

In the January 28, 1909, meeting held at the Grace Church School hall in Milwaukee "high-order enthusiasm" ruled. The thoughts of the meeting centered on the most urgent need of NWC – a gymnasium. For many years Pastor Philipp von Rohr, president of the Wisconsin Synod and a strong supporter of NWC, had suggested that the next building on the campus should be a new gymnasium. President von Rohr had recently died and did not see his dream realized.

It was his son, Hugo von Rohr, who got the ball rolling by placing a motion before the meeting that the Northwestern Club provide the much-needed gymnasium. The motion was made and carried by "a rousing unanimity." Wasting no time, a building committee was immediately formed.



Aug. C. Bendler, Pres.  
Hy. Schroeder, 1st Vice-Pres.  
Ad. Bues, 2nd Vice-Pres.

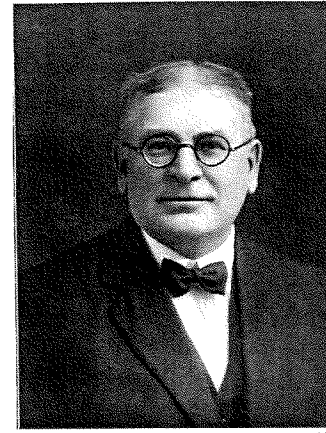
Rein. Breutzmann, Sec'y  
Jul. Dammann, Treas.

Board Members { Oscar Griebling,  
Herm. Ebert,  
Ed. Karrer.

OFFICERS OF N. W. COLLEGE CLUB, MILWAUKEE.

## Forward!

Fund raising took a big leap with a gift of \$3,000 from Mr. and Mrs. George Brumder. Mr. Brumder was the publisher of the Milwaukee German newspaper *Germania* and a long-time member of Grace Lutheran Church. Mr. Brumder was also the publisher of the Wisconsin Synod hymnal. Under his contract with the synod he received most of the profits from the hymnal with a modest amount being returned to the Synod's treasury. Ultimately this initial gift of Mr. and Mrs. Brumder covered one-tenth of the total cost of the new building.



Pastor August Christoph Bendler

The year 1910 was spent in raising funds for the new structure. The solicitors for the project were Mr. E.A. Wurster (also chairman of the building committee), President Ernst of NWC, and Pastor August Bendler, another member of the NWC class of 1878, long-time pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee and an avid NWC supporter.

The meeting of 1912 was held on February 28 at the Republican House in Milwaukee. The report of the meeting in the *Black and Red* (the souvenir "gym" number) states it best:

This meeting was made memorable by "raising the last buoy", the turning of which would point us, under fair sailing conditions, for the finish line in the race and success. It was reported that in a competitive bidding for plans by different architects the plans of Schnetzke and Son of Milwaukee had been adopted and that bids were now being called for. The work during this time was carried on under Rev. Aug. C. Bendler, who during the absence of Mr. E. A. Wurster on a foreign trip was made Acting Chairman.

It may be stated right here, that the Gymnasium complete, exclusive of the necessary paraphernalia, runs some above \$30,000.00 This includes the handsome gifts of a bowling alley by generous Henry Schroeder, the gift of a boiler and lighting fixtures and part of the cement basement floor by the Northwestern College Board and the statue "Sprinter on His Marks" by the St. Matthew's Church of Milwaukee, who was vouchsafed this honorary distinction for having unbegrudgingly permitted its pastor to work for the Gymnasium (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p.6-7).

## The Groundbreaking

When the NWC Club wanted a project done, it moved quickly. The *Black and Red* souvenir gym issue records,

On the 15th day of April in the presence of the school, professors, and scholars, and the main contractor, Mr. Daniel B. Danielson, the Acting Chairman [Pastor Bendler] together with Mr. Henry Schroeder and Rev. Herm. Ebert, members of the Building committee, with a "Vivat, Crescat, Floreat" [let it live, let it grow, let it flourish] turned the first spade," in the wake of which dirt was to fly (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 7).

Four days later on April 19<sup>th</sup> the sixth annual meeting of the Northwestern Club was held at the Charlotte Hotel in Milwaukee and the following officers were elected:

President: Rev. August C. Bendler

First Vice president: Mr. Henry Schroeder

Second Vice President: Mr. Adolf Bues

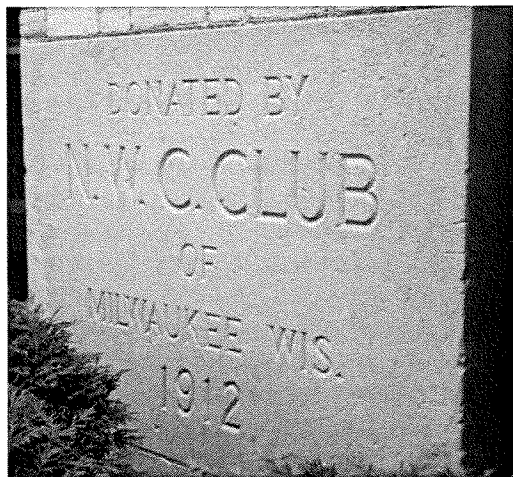
Secretary: Mr. Reinhold B. Breutzmann

Treasurer: Mr. Julius Dammann

Board Member (3 years): Mr. Oscar Griebing (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 7).

## The Laying of the Cornerstone

Work progressed rapidly at the building site so that the cornerstone could be laid on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May – the annual "Northwestern Day" sponsored



by the Northwestern Club at Northwestern College. The June issue of the *Black and Red* reported the event as follows:

Contrary to all expectations, the 30<sup>th</sup> of May dawned upon Northwestern with ideal weather. A very appropriate program was cojointly arranged by members of the Northwestern Club and N.W.C. board. At 9:45 the first [railroad] cars arrived, bringing numerous passengers from Milwaukee. These were greeted and welcomed by strains of music from the N.W.C. band. At 10:30 services were formally begun on the first floor of the new "gym." The first number was a selection by the N.W.C. band. Then President Ernst extended a formal welcome to all the visitors and expressed his great joy at seeing so many people assembled to witness the laying of the cornerstone of the new gymnasium. To this speech Rev. Bendler, president of the Northwestern College Club, made a short reply. Then followed a short hymn by the assemblage, whereupon a prayer was offered and a short passage was read from the Bible by Rev. H. Knuth from Milwaukee. Thereupon Rev. A. Baebenroth pointed out the necessity of good exercise and a good foundation of body as well as soul to endure the hardships and privations of pastoral duties. The Rev. Bendler, of Milwaukee, in a speech of flowery eloquence, gave the significance of the colors, Black and Red, the history of the college, the history of the "old shack" and the history of the N.W. Club, through whose efforts the new gym was being constructed. The ceremony of laying the cornerstone was then performed; after which the whole assembly sang our national hymn "America" in honor of the day ("College Notes," *Black and Red*, June 1912, p. 77-78).

The cornerstone was laid on the southwestern corner of the building. It is simply inscribed "Donated by the N.W.C. Club of Milwaukee, 1912."

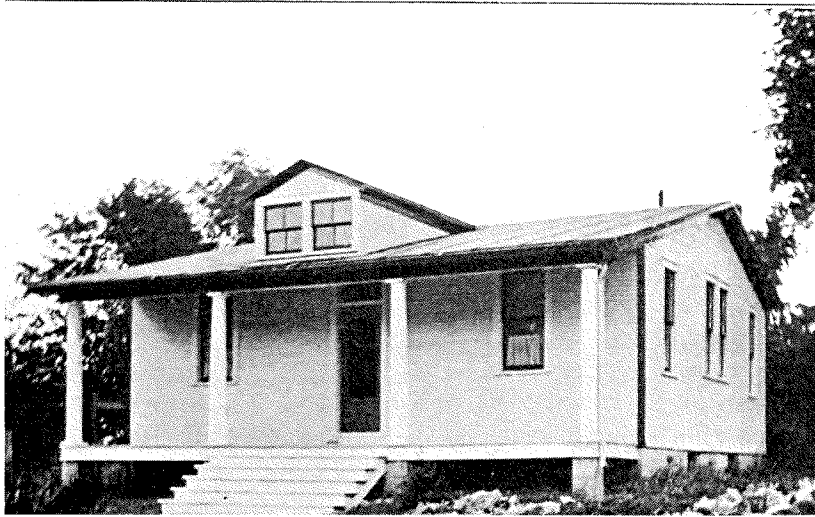
The afternoon activities of the festive day included a baseball game between the NWC seconds and the St. Matthew's Choir from Pastor Bendler's congregation in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee boys were defeated. The second game was played between NWC and Watertown. A track meet followed, held on the new cinder path that the students had just recently completed.

The close of the day's festivities was a sham battle by the college's military company. After a fierce fight between the "Pros" and the "Cons" the enemy's fort was finally exploded, and the enemy itself taken into camp. The fort had been constructed of the remnants of the Old Shack which had been deemed a fire hazard the year before. However, the bulk of the old building had been used for another purpose.



*The enemy fort, built of remnants of the "Old Shack," goes up in a plume of smoke during the sham battle on the day of cornerstone laying of the Gymnasium, May 30, 1912.*

A new Isolation Hospital had been constructed on campus from the recycled materials to keep students who were sick isolated to prevent them from spreading their illnesses throughout the dormitory. The building was commonly known on campus as the "Pest House" and was located where part of the new addition of Augsburg Hall now stands. With the construction of the Isolation Hospital and the destruction of the fort in the sham battle, the Old Shack was no more.



*Infirmary*

## Dedication Day

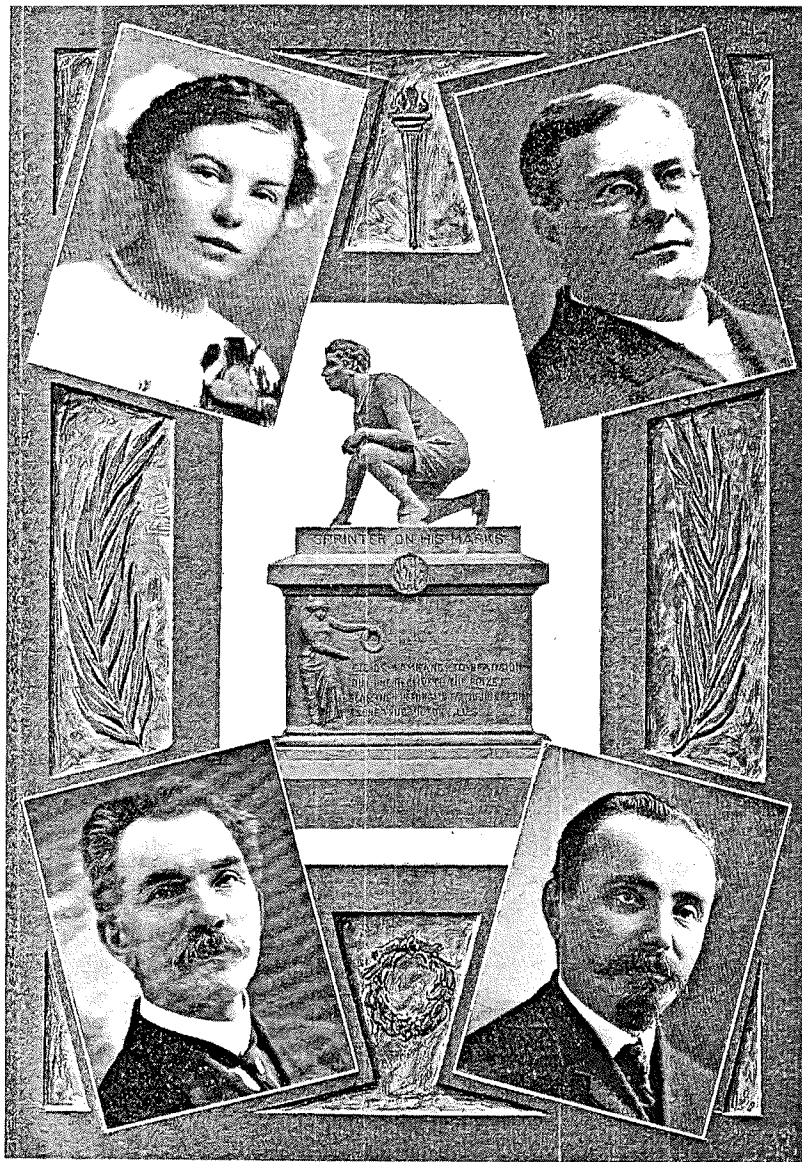
October 20, 1912, was the highlight of several years of activity for the Northwestern Club. The first train cars of NWC Club members left Milwaukee at 7:45 a.m. that morning. The students of NWC got up and made diverse "merry noises" to let the people of Watertown know that October 20 was to be no ordinary day in their community.

According to the *Black and Red* at 2:00 p.m. that afternoon,

There were thousands of good loyal men and women assembled in front of the new gymnasium at whose flagpole the Red, White, and Blue floated grandly, while the Black and Red [the college colors] were in evidence over the other buildings. A few minutes after 2 o'clock the Club in company of the faculty and a host of visitors from the ranks of the "Old Boys" marched from the residence of President August F. Ernst [on College Avenue] to the front of the Gym. And while the band played, all took their positions (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 17).



*Presentation of gymnasium by N. W. College Club of Milwaukee, October 20, 1912*



MISS IRENE BENDLER,  
Who unveiled the statue.  
MR. PHILLIP LOHR,  
Genial Sculptor,  
Firm: Lohr & Weifenbach.

STATUE  
Presented by  
St. Matthew's  
Church.

AUG. C. BENDLER,  
Pastor St. Matthew's Church,  
WM. F. HERRMANN,  
Pres. St. Matthew's Church,  
Milwaukee, Wis.

After a selection from the Male Chorus, Keutzer's "Dies ist der Tag des Herrn," President August Bendler of the NWC Club introduced Mr. William Hermann, president of St. Matthew's Church of Milwaukee, who presented to NWC the statue of the Sprinter on His Marks.

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church had been a most gracious congregation during the building of the gymnasium by letting its pastor, August Bendler, take an active role in the fund raising efforts as well as the building process. In honor of the day the congregation had commissioned a statute to be placed on one of the terraces in front of the gymnasium. Sculpted by Phillip Lohr of the firm Lohr and Weifenbach in Milwaukee, the "Sprinter on His Marks", was to serve as a symbol of inspiration for the young students of NWC. Therefore on the plinth of the statute are engraved these words reminiscent of the Apostle Paul's words to the congregation at Corinth:

*But one receiveth the prize.  
Bear then in mind; In faithful effort  
Alone true victory lies.*

Irene Bendler, the daughter of Pastor August Bendler and later the wife of Pastor Arthur F. Halboth of St. Matthew's congregation and the successor to Pastor Bendler, was given the honor of unveiling the statue. During the unveiling the NWC Band played "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The Sprinter is 7-1/2 feet tall above its foundation. It weights in at 4-1/4 tons. The base measures 5 feet 4 inches by 3 feet 6 inches. It was placed facing north toward the practice field.

President Ernst responded with his own speech thanking the congregation for this work of art. What pleased President Ernst most of all was that there existed a strong, independent, and healthy laity which was good for the church. The NWC Chorus responded with the singing of the college song, "Come and Join in Song Together," with additional stanzas written by – whom else? – Pastor August Bendler.

### The Presentation and Dedication of the Gymnasium

Mr. Emanuel A. Wurster, chairman of the NWC Club's Building Committee was the next speaker with a speech directed to Pastor Bendler. Also a member of the NWC class of 1878, Mr. Wurster expressed his amazement and pleasure at the NW Club reaching its goal of building a gymnasium in just 3 1/2 years. At the conclusion of his speech he passed the keys to the building to Pastor Bendler.

Pastor Bendler, who never let an opportunity to speak pass by, responded to his old schoolmate and concluded by stating:

In the name of the Northwestern Club, and with great personal gratification at such honor, I do herewith accept, not only the keys of the new gymnasium, but also your expressions of loyalty for yourself and your committee. I thank you and the committee with you (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 25).



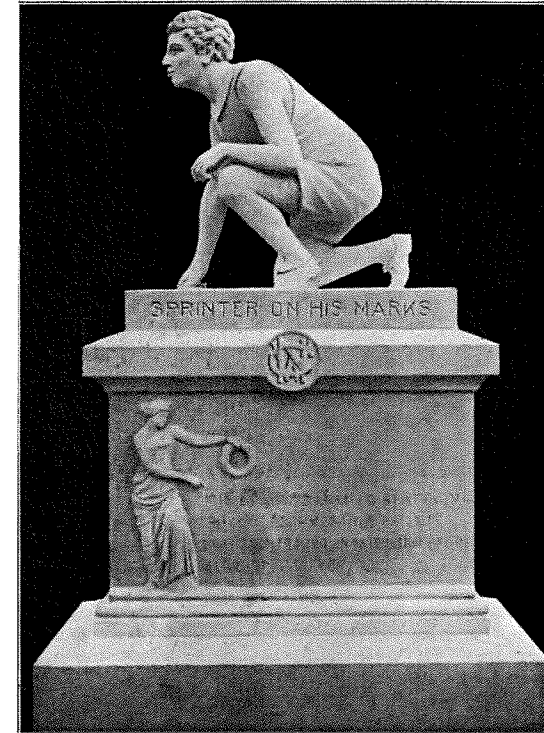


2nd row (left to right) Osc. Griebing, Alb. Wurster, Hugo von Rohr, E. Ebert of  
N. W. Club; Rev. G. Bergemann, Pres. Wis. Syn.  
Lower row (left to right) Prof. Ernst, Pres. College; Ed. Karrer; Wm. Herrmann,  
Pres. Matthew's Church; Aug. Bendler, Pres. N. W. Club.  
Member St. Matthew's Church and "Germania" Representative, B. A. Olfe  
PRESENTATION OF SPRINTER STATUE AND GYMNASIUM, October 20, 1912

The keys were then passed on to Rev. G. Bergemann, president of the Wisconsin Synod. In thanking the NWC Club he "accepted the keys under the condition that the Synod would not incur any expenses with the erection of this building." After the turning over of the keys the Northwestern Male Choir made all the visitors welcome by singing another stanza of the college song:

*Welcome, all the scarred and seasoned  
Veterans of old!  
We will join them in their prowess  
And our flag uphold*

*Swell the chorus ever louder  
Full of joy and glee.  
Hail to thee, our Alma Mater  
Hail, all hail, to thee.*



### The Telegram

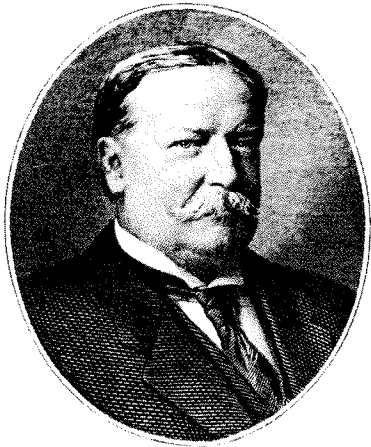
The festivities continued with a surprise – an event which many considered to be the highlight of the day. President Ernst had received a message that morning via telegram. Pastor Bendler was given the honor of reading the message and prefaced the reading of the message as coming "from the man, whom Christians for the reason of the commandment of God respect as their superior, from that high-minded and thoughtful man in the White House at Washington, our great president William Howard Taft" (*Black and Red*, Oct. 1912, p. 33)

The telegram read as follows:

Executive Office, Beverly, Mass., Oct. 20, 1912

To the Rev. August F. Ernst, President of Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.

I congratulate you and your associates on the occasion of the dedication of the new gymnasium of Northwestern College. From my boyhood I



have been on terms of intimacy with men of your church; for in my home town more than one-third of our people are Germans, a great majority of whom are Lutherans. I can not too highly commend their sturdy character and reliance for the great part they have taken in our civilization. Those whom I knew best were the leaders of those Germans who went into the civil war to uphold the union, vindicate freedom, and eradicate slavery. I understand that your college strives for religion, liberal education, and good health. I wish you every success and feel sure that your efforts will be for the good of the church, the people of the church and the country.

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

The *Black and Red* states that "This message was received most enthusiastically and with great acclaim expressive of that best sentiment a Christian, above all, can not fail in: 'Hail to the Chief!'" (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 33).

### The Celebration

The *Black and Red* continues:

And finally all were invited to inspect the building. And the grand procession was headed by Prof. Aug. F. Ernst, Pres. of the College and Rev. Aug. C. Bandler, Pres. Of the Northw. Club, the latter insisting that the former be the first to enter the hall. During this *Rundgang* the N.W. C. Orchestra rendered concert music on the Gym. Stage (*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 33).

After this a religious program on the part of the Synod was carried out. And after that the NWC Glee Club, principally, entertained the people.

And on departing home we still heard what must ever ring in the ears of those who attended on this festive day. It was the cry of the gladdened school that to us, who love Old Northwestern, had the gladsome sound of sweet music:

*What is the matter with our new Gym?*

*That is alright!*

*Who is alright?*

*Our new gym is alright!"*

*Who says so?*

*We all say so!*

*What do we all say?*

*Our new Gym is alright!*

*It is, it is, it is alright!*

VIVAT SEQUENS

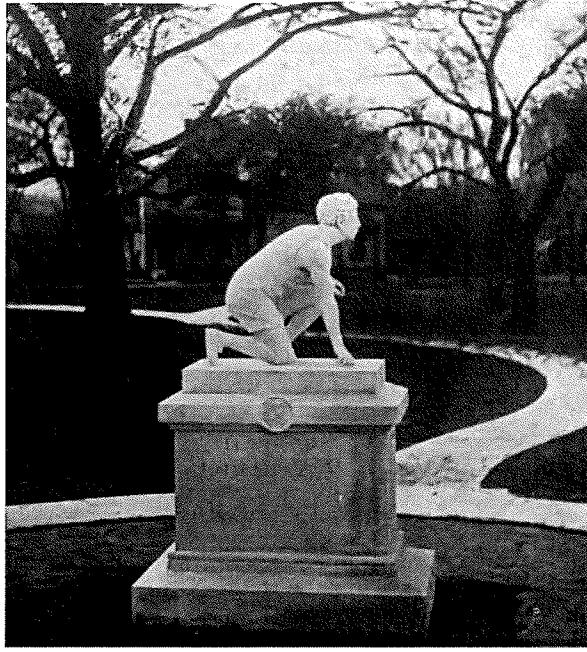
(*Black and Red*, Oct 1912, p. 33)

### Features of the 1912 Gymnasium

The Northwestern College Gymnasium of 1912 was a state-of-the-art building for its time and recognized as one of the finest gymnasiums in the state of Wisconsin. The following features are noted:



- The building was placed northwest of the "new" dormitory of 1905 to form an "L" facing College Avenue which was 250 feet away. Today the building forms a similar "L" with the Wittenberg dormitory.
- A sidewalk from College Avenue to the gymnasium snaked its way among two gigantic elms that at the time of the gymnasium dedication were estimated to be several hundred years old.

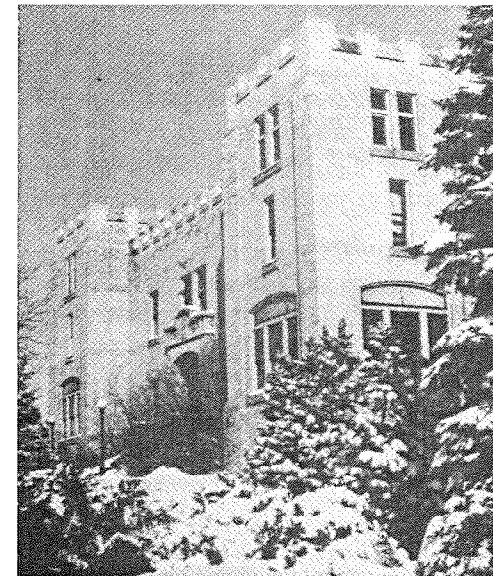


*Sprinter and Old Elms*

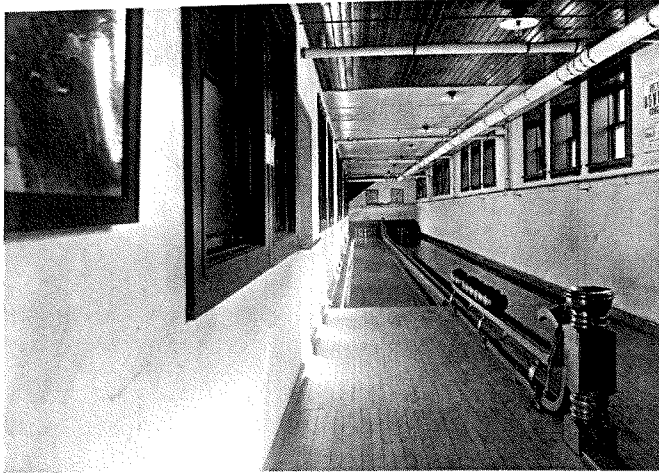
- In front of the gymnasium were two terraces. The lower terrace had a circular sidewalk and in the center of the circle was placed the Sprinter.
- The gymnasium itself was built of concrete, cream brick, and iron with hardwood floors and white brick facing on the inside walls. To control the acoustics within the building the floors were deafened.



- Hung from the roof trusses was a running track eight feet wide. The running track ran along all four interior walls. Because it was suspended there were no posts or pillars to block the gymnasium floor.
- The length of the original building – exclusive of the stairs – was 112 feet.
- The width of the building – exclusive of the towers – was 70 feet.
- The height of the basement from concrete floor to ceiling was 10 feet 2 inches.
- The height of the building from the main gymnasium floor to the ceiling trusses was 35 feet.
- The battlement design was chosen for the building because of the building's use by the Northwestern College Military Company, a popular organization on the campus in the early part of the century.

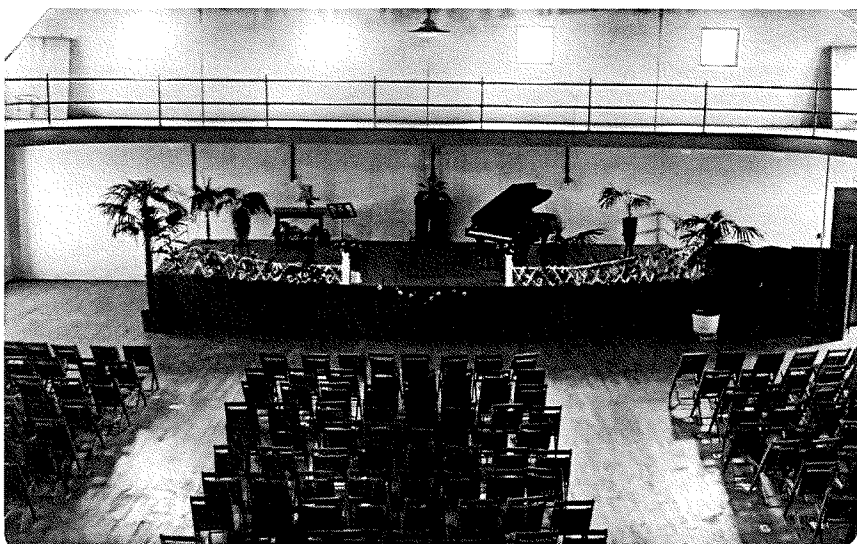


When entering the building using the main entrance on the west, steps were located up the gymnasium floor or down to the basement level. Found in the basement level on the north side were locker rooms, shower baths, toilet and wash facilities, the boiler and the coal room. On the south side of the basement (currently the classroom side of the lower level) were two bowling alleys. These were donated by Mr. Henry Schroeder for use by the faculty. The *Black and Red* records that "this feature of the Gym was dictated by the conviction that something ought to be done for the professors as well as for the student body. A private shower bath was also reserved for the professors" (*Black and Red*. Oct 1912, p.9).



In the center of the lower level room was a large room to be used by the different music organizations – band, orchestra, glee club, and male choir.

- The main floor of the gym measured 67 feet by 96 feet.
- The “rear of the room” (now the side with the stage) had at its dedication a removable stage – 3-1/2 feet high – with a railing on either side.
- Before entering the main floor of the gym were the tower rooms. The room to the north was used as an armory to store the rifles, swords, flags, and ammunition used by the NWC Military Company. The south tower room was used as an office and record room.



- On level with the running track the entire space of the front of the building, including the towers, was left open from tower room to tower room to allow a “Battery Room” for baseball practice.

## Reaction

The collecting of funds by the NWC Club for the building of a new gymnasium hit a nerve – both positively and negatively – with the people of the Wisconsin Synod. All together more than \$30,000 was collected; most of the gifts ranged between \$5 and \$25 and there were only twenty gifts of \$100 and more. While George Brumder had donated the initial \$3,000, following his death his widow contributed another \$4,000. By dedication day the building was paid in full.

In the history of the Wisconsin Synod this is probably the only building project on a synodical campus where the Synod was not involved in concept, design, fund-raising, or construction. Similar efforts were tried at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw; the results of those campaigns are not known.

There was one individual who did not like what had taken place at Northwestern College. Prof. John P. Koehler was the president of the Synod’s Theological Seminary then located in Wauwatosa. In his book, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, Prof. Koehler does not hesitate to state his opinion of the building project:

The building of the new gymnasium in 1912 signaled the heyday of the unwholesome outside influence in the administration of Northwestern. It was financed by the Northwestern Club, originally a harmless organization started with sincere enthusiasm in Milwaukee by Otto Ernst, a son of the director, and open to all former students as well as alumni, but presently monopolized by the opponents of the Wauwatosa [Seminary] faculty. The dedication of the well-built and equipped new gym was utilized to vent some personal piques and to glorify the thoughtless efforts of the chief promoters to do something for the school....but the very building so glorified and though a valuable addition to the school long asked for by the students, calculated to foster the “Sportgeist” then most rampant and to endear to the students and future ministers the fulfillers of their wish, was the scene of [Dean of Students Martin] Eichmann’s last fatal encounter with student insolence, and his sudden, sad death, with its attending circumstances placed a period, as it were, behind all this. (J. P. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*. St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970. p. 227)

## Time Marches On

Northwestern College had its new gymnasium. What happened in the years after?

- The NWC athletic director at the time of dedication (Prof. E. E. Kowalke who later became the next president of Northwestern College) grudgingly yielded one-half of the gymnasium floor and then the whole floor to basketball. About 1920 the gymnastic apparatus began to disappear from the gym floor. Basketball had become the king of inside sports.
- The NWC Military Company ceased to exist in 1929. It was the victim of a changing society in the years after World War I. The monotony of military drill could not compete against the enthusiasm of basketball.
- The Northwestern Club had its high-water mark with the dedication of the gymnasium. The organization held its last banquet in 1914. The beginning of the Great War in 1914 caused everyone to think seriously about the impending carnage in Europe.
- Pastor Bendler continued to be a strong and passionate supporter of NWC until his unexpected death on June 2, 1929, in Buffalo, New York, while returning from a trip to the Holy Land. He had served his beloved St. Matthew's congregation in Milwaukee for 39 years with a total of about 50 years in the ministry.
- Henry Schroeder, who turned the first spade at the groundbreaking, rolled the first ball down the faculty bowling alley he donated, and commissioned the large painting of President Philipp von Rohr that for many years graced the reading room of the NWC library, died in 1919 at the age of 58. Upon his death it was reported that he left 5% of his large estate to NWC. That amount alone was \$25,000.



*Prof. E. E. Kowalke  
Director of Athletics*



*Pastor August Bendler*

- Dr. August F. Ernst served as president of NWC until 1919 – a total of 48 years. Upon his retirement he continued to live in Watertown until passing on to eternal glory a few years later.
- Two weeks after the dedication of the gymnasium, President William Howard Taft, whose sending of the telegram at the dedication is now legendary, lost the 1912 presidential election to Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt.
- In 1935 a new athletic director and coach was called to NWC in the person of Leonard Umnus. His impact on the gymnasium and athletic program at NWC is inestimable. The gymnasium became his building which he shared with the students and eventually with fellow coaches such as Ed Pieper and Lloyd "Turk" Thompson.

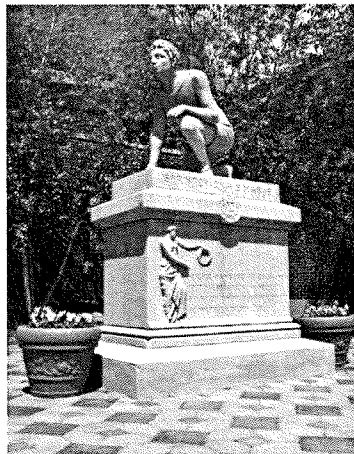


- In 1949 an addition was built to the east end of the building to house a stage and appropriate rooms underneath. It meant removing some of the running track. Perhaps not considered at the time, this event was the first step in turning the building into the music auditorium.
- In 1971 a new gymnasium was built. It was decided that musical functions would be housed in the gymnasium now turned auditorium. A massive remodeling took place on the lower level. The building now became the realm of musical "coaches" — Dr. Arnold O. Lehmann, Prof. William Birsching, Prof. Franklin Zabell, and Prof. Randy Bode (and friends).



Caricature of Dr. Arnold O. Lehmann

- The Sprinter became the most recognized and well-travelled piece of sculpture in the Wisconsin Synod. It was eventually moved to the front of the new NWC gymnasium in the 1970s. Upon amalgamation in 1995 the Sprinter moved to the campus of Martin Luther College in New Ulm where the tradition began of the graduating seniors of the pastor track giving the statue a pat on the posterior as they marched into the MLC gymnasium for graduation. Recently the statue was moved to its own little plaza overlooking the athletic fields and the Chapel of the Christ. The Sprinter is a veteran of many years of ministerial education. It's a shame the statue cannot talk!



Special thanks to....

- Prof. David Gosdeck and Mrs. Heidi Meyer of the Martin Luther College Library who accessed the archives for several volumes of the *Black and Red* which were photocopied and sent to Watertown.
- Prof. John Hartwig of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library who sent the NWC Archives listing and Mrs. Cathy Zell of the library staff who helped give access to the archives and located specific materials. Her enthusiasm on any research project is contagious!
- Pastor Brett Brauer and Pastor Paul Kuckhahn of Trinity Lutheran Church in Watertown who translated a few key Latin phrases.
- Numerous pastors, professors, and former students of NWC, NPS, and LPS who had stories and memories to share.
- Prof. Carl Hochmuth for his patient work in putting together the slide show that accompanied the narration.
- Prof. Bill Pekrul of Martin Luther College for a recent photo of the Sprinter.
- President Em. Robert J. Voss who set me straight on a number of items, not all related to the NWC gymnasium.

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## CARLETON TOPPE'S Northwestern

by Frederick J. Toppe

Carleton Toppe was eleven years old when he first heard about Northwestern College. His pastor came to speak to his parents about sending him to Northwestern Prep and College so that he could prepare for the ministry. Pastor John Henning taught the young boy in the recently opened school at St. John's Lutheran Church, a few miles northwest of Lake Mills in the area the local farmers called Newville. Carleton's abilities had led the pastor to see him as a pastor, and supported by his wife who was a relative of the Toppe family, he spoke with Otto and Emma Toppe to encourage them to send their son to Northwestern.

The Toppes knew about Northwestern and had relatives who were attending there. One of Otto Toppe's cousins was Professor Zich, then teaching at the seminary. But now they were confronted with the question, should their son should go off to school? Carleton was their only son, with three younger sisters. He later recalled:



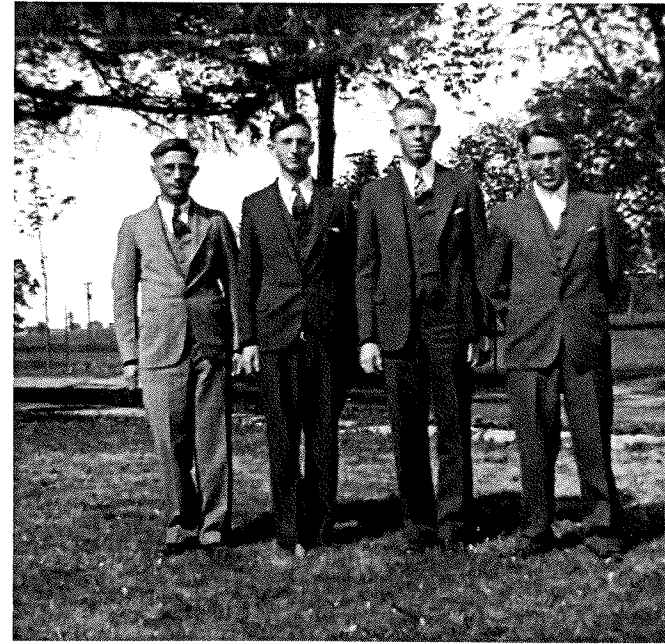
*Carleton Toppe confirmation  
Newville church 1926*

So the main point was a decision my parents had to make to let the oldest son, who was a son who could be expected to be an assistant to the father, and who could be expected to take over the farm. That must have made them reflect – what about this? ...If there is any specific decision in my life or influence in my life, this was it. That determined the direction for the rest of my life (Oral History, page 16).

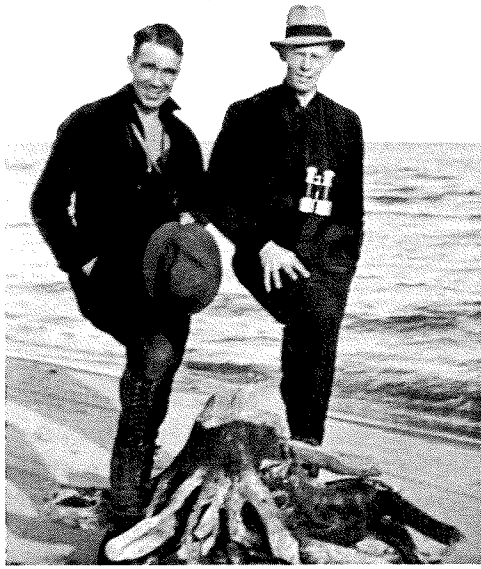
In the fall of 1926, Carlton Toppe began his student life at Northwestern, entering the prep department. He was barely twelve years old, since he had skipped two grades in his one room school. He sent his first letter home writing to his parents, "I am getting along good so far," and ending the letter with a PS, "I need the money by Saturday," the money to pay the gymnasium and sports fee. The letter is signed Carlton Toppe. Somewhere during his years at Northwestern he decided to add the "e" to his name and became Carleton Toppe. That is how he consistently wrote his name, never using his middle initial. He knew the propensity of students to make nicknames out of initials, and he didn't want to become an EEK or a PEE or a CAT (Carleton Alfred Toppe).

Northwestern in the 1920's was a different place from what we see today. The only surviving building from that era is the old gymnasium, now the music center. Every other building used in the 1920s and 1930s has been torn down and replaced in a series of building programs that began in the early 1950s. The school's function has also changed. Then it served as a community high school and area college and as a technical school that prepared people to work in business, along with the program that prepared boys for the pastoral ministry. It was only the more able students who continued through the eight years of high school and college following the classic German *Gymnasium* program that began the study of German and Latin in high school and added classical and Biblical Greek and also Hebrew in college. In his senior year, Carleton's class schedule of 24 hours included 12 hours of German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, with additional classes in English, philosophy, history, and religion – eight different courses.

Toppe thrived at Northwestern. His easy-going nature made him a good mix with his fellow students, his academic abilities gave him good success in the classroom, and home was just a half hour away. He could easily go home for a weekend and at school breaks. In the summer he helped on the farm and so earned his school expenses. Increasingly he involved himself in school activities, especially the literary, serving as the editor of the *Black and Red*,



*Carleton Toppe with three senior classmates at Juneau  
1934*



*Carleton Toppe hiking with Albert Bussewitz at Two Rivers 1937-38*

the student body's official publication, and also as editor of the unofficial privately type-written literary magazine prepared by the Lamda Alpha Delta society. He was not involved with music programs. Neither did he participate in the athletic programs, since he had entered school so young and was not physically mature to join in the sports enjoyed by his older classmates. He was conscious of the age difference between himself and his peers. He wrote in his journal when he was chosen class president, that he was "concerned about my lack of self-confidence (inferiority complex)."

We have a moving insight into the thoughts of this young man through the journal-diary that he began keeping on his eighteenth birthday, at the end of his sophomore year of college. The journal-diary continued in some form for the next 64 years. In his retirement years he edited the first several years of the diary, excerpting materials for his family to read. The diary reveals the heart of a young man wondering, what do I do after Northwestern?

What had entered his life at this time was an interest in the out-of-doors, specifically in ornithology. With his friends Albert Bussewitz and Arnold Bolle, he threw himself into hiking through the countryside in the Watertown area and exploring its natural life. He wrote, "Perhaps Buzzy and I were just young Wordsworths at the time, discovering nature and relishing it." His two friends

went on to careers in this field, Bussewitz to the Audubon Society in the Boston area, and Bolle to the forestry department at the University of Montana in Missoula. We listen in as he writes in his journal:

- "Drawn to forestry as an occupation." 1932
- "Nature is to me now all in all." 1933
- "Inexorably I am being drawn into the maw of the ministry." 1933
- "I told Mother that I wouldn't be a minister. But I didn't tell her what I wanted to be." 1933
- "I asked B [Bussewitz] if I could be a minister. He said that one of the objections was that I didn't associate with people enough." 1933
- "Wrote a letter home, broaching the subject of taking up a different career. What a consternation will be raised at the other end." 1933
- His Dad wrote back: "Some good sense in the letter." "He wouldn't force me to become a minister." "Never a word about his feelings on the subject." "Take plenty of time so you won't have to regret it later." 1933
- "Mother thought that the life of a forester was 'too wild and rough.' That's my most serious objection too." 1933
- "Every time I get into church or a religious atmosphere, I decide strongly against being a minister." 1933
- "I'm being, inexorably, drawn into the ministry." 1934
- After a trip to the seminary: "There is something earnest, spiritual about it...I will very likely turn up at the Sem next year." 1934
- "Dad received only \$900.00 in milk checks last year. Rangerdom is fading into the background." 1934
- "Mailed my application to Thiensville." 1934
- "Now that I'm going to the Seminary, I'm spoken to with awe and reverence." 1934
- "I never knew so many people were interested in my being a minister." 1934
- When Arnie Bolle wrote about his classes at the University of Montana – "The old longing possesses me. But 'He that hath put his hand to the plow...'" 1934
- "One of the great days of my life, on the greatest day since my baptism." (When he was installed into the ministry) 1937





*Carleton Toppe's Northwestern College graduation class in 1934*

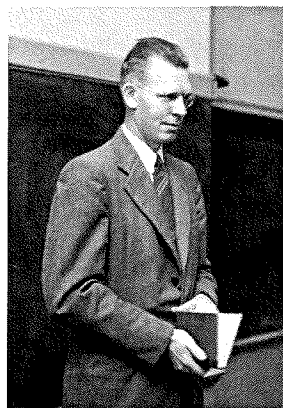
In his first year at the seminary, he visited Northwestern and spent the night in the dormitory. He writes his observations: "The more I see NW now, the less I desire to see of it."

"The general lack of cleanliness and the noise, the behavior like that of a 'bunch of kids,' the conduct of the upperclassmen – all leave a disagreeable taste in my mouth." Northwestern had done for him what it should, helped him grow up, not just as a scholar, but as a man. Years later he compared what happens at Northwestern to the aging of wine until it becomes mature and ready to be used.

Upon his graduation from the seminary, Toppe was one of three in the class who immediately received calls. Because of congregational and synodical financial difficulties during the Great Depression many seminary graduates had to wait a long time before they received calls into the pastoral ministry. He served at First German in Manitowoc, then one of the premier congregations of the synod, under Pastor Leonard Koeninger. He helped teach in the school providing relief for the male teachers in the upper grades, he worked with the junior society (young people's), and he preached once a month in German and English. He found the German work difficult, needing "twelve hours or more on Saturday" to memorize the sermon in two languages. One of his additional duties was canvassing the southwest portion of Manitowoc with the goal of establishing a daughter congregation there. A few years later Bethany church was established where he had canvassed.

Two years later Pastor Toppe was called to serve two rural congregations in western Wisconsin at Auburn and Brush Prairie, both northwest of Bloomer/Chippewa Falls. He served the congregations for four years. He also canvassed the area north of the congregations to Chetek to determine the possi-

bility of establishing additional preaching stations. In 1943 he was called to the congregation in Elmwood and also worked with the new mission congregation in Ellsworth, twenty miles west. During this time he was married to Violet Pleuss, whom he had met at First German in Manitowoc. They were married in 1941 and were blessed with four children over the next ten years.



*Carleton Toppe as a new professor at NWC*

In 1948 Pastor Toppe received a call to serve on the faculty of Northwestern College, "to teach principally Latin and English and also such other subjects as you may be equipped to teach." In the cover letter with the call there is the further explanation that the goal would be for him to "take over Latin in the College Department and also part of the English in that Department." The offer was made to fund graduate training at a university during the summer months. President Kowalke had remembered one of his students and his abilities, not only as a student in the classroom but also as a leader for his class, as well as his experience in teaching. Pastor Toppe accepted that call and moved to Northwestern College in the summer of 1948. The family lived in the big white house close to the Sprinter statue that was then

in front of the old gymnasium. He had come back to the school where he had grown up as a boy and young man. He came back as a pastor to help train those who would become the next generation of pastors. He was to stay at Northwestern for the next 39 years.

During his first few years of teaching he busied himself with the thorough study of the materials he was to teach. He realized that he needed further education in the area of English, the field in which his teaching responsibilities were increasing. In the summer of 1950 he began a course of study at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, taking courses in the Romantic Poets and in Milton during his first summer, courses he was later to teach to a generation of Northwestern students. He attended other summer school sessions in 1952, in 1954, and in 1956, when he completed his work and received his MA in English. His roommate for several of the summer sessions was his next door neighbor, Richard Jungkuntz.

In 1954 Professor Toppe took on the additional duties of serving as the school's registrar, keeping track of student records. In 1959 he received the call to serve as the president of the school. The call came as a surprise to most people who had not seen him as one of the likely candidates for the position. It also came as a relief to many, since tensions on the Northwestern campus were high because of the challenges brought to the school by the continuing discussions with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Northwestern served

students from both the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, and it had faculty members sympathetic to both the Wisconsin and the Missouri positions. Professor Toppe accepted the call, and on July 1, 1959, began his leadership of the school that had educated him. It was now Carleton Toppe's Northwestern as it had been E.E. Kowalke's Northwestern before him, and A.F. Ernst's Northwestern before him. These three presidents served the school for a total of 116 years.

When he was approaching retirement, President Toppe was interviewed by the *Black and Red*. In the interview he commented on the needs when he became president and on the changes that had taken place during his 28 years at the head of the school. He was asked, "Upon entering your term as president, what were your chief aims?" He answered,

I've mentioned the curriculum already. That was an important factor. I was concerned about more use of the library. ...When I became president in 1959, there was a certain tension on campus. We had a group that was opposing the position of the Wisconsin Synod and was winning students for their cause. So a primary concern that I had was to preserve the confessional position of the college. ...So there were basically two themes I was concerned about. The one was confessional, the other scholarly (*Black and Red*, February 1987, p. 248).

One of the reasons Professor Toppe was called to the school's presidency was concern for the confessional position of the school. There was on campus "a group that was opposing the position of the Wisconsin Synod." The College Board wanted to ensure that the school through its leadership would stay on the side of confessional Lutheranism, and called a man who was known to hold to sound Christian doctrine. For several years he had been writing for *The Northwestern Lutheran* (predecessor of *Forward in Christ*), as he continued to do for 37 years. The faithful confessional Lutheranism of the school continued, accepted and unchallenged, during all of President Toppe's service to the school. Everyone knew where he stood and where the school stood, and where its successor schools stand, both Luther Prep in Watertown and the college program at New Ulm.

The second matter that President Toppe brought up as he looked back was his concern for the curriculum at Northwestern. He commented in the interview:

The curriculum at that time [1959] was 26 plus classes per week (211 credit hours required for graduation). This was not college standard. The professors couldn't make difficult assignments because there were so many class hours. Then it was cut back to 19 plus classes per week with

electives. I wanted to get the students to use the library, to do more reading assignments (*Black and Red*, February 1987, p. 247).

Although the class hours per week were reduced, the professors were relieved of the pressure to hold back. In the past the faculty was easier on the students, generally. (*Black and Red*, February 1987, p. 248)

When former President Kowalke wrote *Centennial Story* in 1965 for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school, he noted:

In the hundred years of the life of the college, the curriculum has undergone only one really drastic change. That was in 1869, when it was decided to shape our course after the model of the German *Gymnasium*, with its emphasis on language and history, rather than after the usual American college, which is characterized by the arts and science course (Erwin E. Kowalke, *Centennial Story*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1965. p. 272).

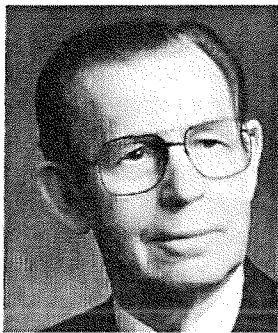
President Toppe saw the need for change in the *Gymnasium* model, and soon after he became president in 1959, those changes began to happen. A major revision of the college curriculum was undertaken in 1960-1961, a change that reduced the credit hours needed for graduation from 211 to 157, from 26.3 hours a week to 19.6, and also allowed for electives with students choosing areas of study that were of interest to them. Further revisions followed in 1970 - 1971, 1979 - 1980, and 1985 - 1986, with a total reduction in hours from 211 to 134 and the opening up of the curriculum to a considerable number of elective choices. The program developed under President Toppe at Northwestern is still the curriculum in place for pre-seminary students at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, with a total of 132/133 hours currently required for graduation.

President Toppe's evident interest in Northwestern's curriculum came from his concern for students and for their education. He was concerned about the nature of Northwestern, with a prep and a college program on the same campus, with courses taught by teachers who might serve both high school and college students. President Kowalke had seen the challenges of this arrangement and wrote in *Centennial Story* that the program had "a certain weakness. There is a possibility that methods proper for college teaching will creep into the high school instruction and that high school methods will be used in some branches on the college level" (*Centennial Story*, p. 271). In his book *Holding the Course*, which covers Northwestern's history from 1965 to 1990, President Toppe wrote about the curriculum revisions, that they "permit both instructors and students to do more college-level work in their

course" and that "the instructor does less prepackaging of course material; the student must develop more of it on his own" (p. 34).

"More college-level work"— the kind of work he saw in other colleges and that he had personally experienced in Madison. Concern for curriculum was also concern for the students who came to Northwestern to prepare for the pastoral ministry. They did not all have the same abilities nor the same interests nor the same preparatory courses. If Northwestern was to keep preparing students for the synod's ministry, it needed to be more flexible in meeting student and abilities, offering programs that fit the students rather than prescribing a program that the students had to fit.

In an assessment of the school's curriculum Toppe wrote:



Carleton Toppe  
President of NWC

Northwestern must be more than a Bible college and also more than a traditional liberal arts college. It must also be less than either. In this tension the balance of an ideal curriculum is hard to achieve. Current needs tend to tilt it towards the pragmatic and the ad hoc; the benefit of more than a century of a tried and true curriculum argues for the preservation of a broader culture. If the course of studies is not to become a mere creature of the day, a passing fancy, blown about by every social, cultural, and ecclesiastical wind, its changes must be tried up with the foundation on which our fathers built the education of our Synod's pastoral ministry (*Holding the Course*, p. 35).

Any discussion of Northwestern's curriculum most always end up with the purpose of the school. The Wisconsin Synod established and maintained the college for the single purpose of preparing young men for entrance into Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to train to serve as pastors of the Wisconsin Synod. President Toppe knew from personal experience that when this purpose is not communicated to students, there is confusion and uncertainty on the part of students about what they should be doing with their lives. President Toppe reflected on his own experiences at Northwestern: "As a layman's son, I would say that the ministry was a somewhat distant, vague, and perhaps unrealistic concept" (*Black and Red*, February 1987, p. 246). He was therefore determined that the school's purpose be better shared with students, that they be guided and encouraged towards the goal for which they were preparing themselves at Northwestern. Looking back in 1987 he commented: "The average student comes to Northwestern today with contact with recruitment... Students coming in now are more conscious of the pur-

pose of the school. I would say that there is more motivation given by the school prior to your coming and once you're here. I didn't have much of that kind of motivation at that time" (*Black and Red*, p. 246-247). President Toppe was especially thankful that the number and percentages of Northwestern graduates going on to the seminary increased and continued at high levels during the time of his leadership of the school. Northwestern was here for a purpose, and neither students nor faculty should forget that purpose.

All of these changes made demands on the faculty and the courses they taught. President Toppe wrote concerning curriculum changes:

The negotiations that effected these reductions were intensive and time-consuming. In 1979-80, for example, the ad hoc committee met 46 times. Deadlocks might have been anticipated as faculty departments defended their turf, but they did not develop because there was a collegial determination to reach a consensus, and there was a willingness to defer to a majority decision concerning course priorities (*Holding the Course*, p. 32).

"Reaching a consensus" and "deferring to a majority decision" are easier to write than to achieve. Northwestern has been described as "a faculty-run school managed by the president." (Dean Edward Lindemann interview)

The president did not "run" the school nor did the Board of Control. Ever since the time of the troubles at Northwestern in the 1920's that helped give birth to the Protestant Conference, the faculty made clear its determination to be included in the management of the school. The continuing challenge before President Toppe was to lead the independent-minded faculty members to the changes the school needed to make. It was his skill as a leader that established the faculty committees needed to evaluate the issues, prepare recommendations, then to guide the faculty to "reach a consensus" and "defer to the majority." And it was the trust of the school's Board of Control in the process that led them to support the decisions the faculty and president brought before them. President Toppe's management style respected the collegiality of the faculty and put confidence in their work, all the while guiding the school to best serve the students and the synod.

The faculty was encouraged to help in the encouragement of students towards the ministry. There was a memorable day in the spring of 1967 that my classmates still talk about. The new president's house had been built at the crest of the hill under the water tower, and I suggested holding a housewarming party for my classmates. My father also invited the faculty to attend and bought the beer for the evening. My classmates marveled at meeting together with the faculty and having the kind of personal contact they had not previously experienced.

Faculty members were also encouraged to prepare themselves for the

teaching work they were called to do. President Toppe appreciated the opportunities he had for specialized training in his area of teaching. There was an increasing expectation at Northwestern that new faculty members should be given the opportunity to do advanced study in their teaching areas. Today almost all of the professors who teach in the pastor track program at Martin Luther College have specialized degrees. They have also served in the pastoral ministry so that they know the work for which they are preparing their students.

President Toppe accomplished these changes without the programs and staff that now exist at our schools. He writes about his work at the beginning of his presidency:

It was a simpler administration in 1965. There was no academic dean, no recruitment office, no financial aids office, no audio-visual director. There was no secretarial service for the faculty and for the athletic director, and only part-time service for the president, the bursar, the librarian, and the business manager (*Holding the Course*, p. 9).

When President Toppe was called as the school's president, he served not only as the president of the college department, but also as the president of the high school department. It was not until 1974 that the prep and college departments were separated and each received its own president. In the late sixties and into the seventies, when the school reached its largest enrollments, there were over 500 students on campus.

President Toppe also served as the dean of women, in charge of matters pertaining to the school's coeds, both in high school and college, especially the students who boarded in town before there was dormitory space for girls. On Friday and Saturday evenings there were many calls from girls asking for permission to be out later than their curfew time, as well as urgent calls about cars broken down and about accidents.

He was in charge of recruitment and admissions, making sure that potential students knew about the school and also knew about their successful enrollment. When the draft came in the 1960s, he signed the students' 4-D draft exemptions and handled correspondence with uncooperative draft boards.

His already excellent work habits helped him cope with all of the demands of the presidency. Every day had the same schedule: Up at 7:00 a.m. two cups of tea with breakfast, home at noon for the main meal of the day, supper with two more cups of tea, snack of crackers and cheese at 10:00 p.m. to bed at 11:00. He made trips to the bank and to the barber on Friday afternoons. His work during the school year easily reached eighty hours a week. He took along his tests and term papers to correct during holiday visits to the relatives in Manitowoc. It took a long time to correct 70 term papers in college English. When he began teaching the class in I Corinthians, he worked

through the Greek text and commentaries and translations, spending thousands of hours to do so. In the summer he tended his garden, keeping his ties to the soil he had worked on in his youth and helping raise the food we ate during the year. At one time we had nine different fruits being grown in our backyard. The only larger breaks he took were our vacation trips, often to fairly distant places, often to some place with different species of birds than could be found in the Midwest. One of his joys was visiting pastors in distant places, showing up at their door or at a church service and reminding them of their years at Northwestern. It was a marvel for everyone, that he knew and recognized those who had attended Northwestern, remembering the year of their graduation and the places they had served in the ministry.

In 1987 he retired at the age of 73 after 50 years in the ministry. When he looked at Northwestern, he knew it was his school, not only the school that had molded him, but also the school he had molded. When he retired in 1987, the school facilities looked much the same as they do now. The only additions since then are the wing off of Augsburg Hall and the connecting building between the library/science building and the chapel/classroom building. The campus plan devised in the 1960s of two large quadrangles formed by the dormitories and the service buildings continues to give the neat and structured campus we have today.

The greatest change to Northwestern College came in 1995, when the college program at Northwestern was moved to the Dr. Martin Luther College campus in New Ulm and merged with that school to become Martin Luther College. The school facilities in Watertown became Luther Prep. The recommendation to close the college department at Northwestern and amalgamate it with DMLC was long debated, and by Northwestern graduates much dreaded. President Toppe knew that if he had stepped into the discussion and spoken out about the proposal, his views would have been respected and could have been decisive in the discussion. But his approach throughout his presidency had been to encourage discussion and then to have decisions made based on the merits of a proposal rather than on emotional appeals. The vote was made to move Northwestern's program to New Ulm, and so ended the college's existence in Watertown after 130 years. It was satisfying to President Toppe that his grandson was a member of the college graduating class in its last year at the Watertown campus.

Of the four congregations he had served in his pastoral ministry, three of them are no more; they have been amalgamated with neighboring congregations. Northwestern College in Watertown is no more, amalgamated with a sister school. But the work done in those congregations and at Northwestern continues, for the Lord's church needs those who serve, not to build up places, but to build up the people of God in this country and around the world. One of his former students spoke to me earlier this year and told me that he kept remembering a chapel devotion President Toppe had given fifty years

ago when he was a *quintaner*, a devotion about “redeeming the time” and so making the best use of one’s life. That devotion changed him then and continued to guide his life, even though, as he said, the devotion was given “in his dry manner.”

A year after Northwestern closed, a form of Alzheimer’s came upon President Toppe. Very quickly – within two months – he lost his ability to take care of his affairs, and within a half year he lost his ability to take care of himself. Together with his wife he moved into an assisted living facility first in Watertown and then in Jefferson. His body was healthy, but his mind no longer related to anyone or anything. He died on the Saturday after Easter in 1998, and was buried in Watertown. His six grandsons were the pall bearers.

Carleton Toppe was a man of contradictions. He was an outdoors man who spent his life at a desk job. He was a private person who did his work in the public eye. He was a scholar who ended up in management. He was a reserved person who became a leader. He was a literary person who wrote about spiritual matters. But above all he was a man of faith in his Lord Jesus, whom he served with his life. And he was a man of Northwestern College, the school that had made him the man that he was, and the school that he had made the school that it still is.

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