

A HISTORY OF MARTIN LUTHER MEMORIAL HOME  
*South Lyon, Mi.*  
1957 - 1985

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Mequon, Wisconsin

Steve Witt  
1985

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A HISTORY OF MARTIN LUTHER MEMORIAL HOME  
(1957 - 1985)

by  
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Church History -373  
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Introduction

There are many historical events which have shaped American Lutheranism. Each event has its own story. Each event has to some degree been significant in painting the "overall picture" of American Lutheranism. As long as our Lord permits the Lutheran Church to exist in America, significant historical events will continue to take place and be recorded as historically important.

The significant historical event in American Lutheranism which I have chosen to record and share with you is a history of Martin Luther Memorial Home. Some might argue that the development of MLMH is not a historically significant event in American Lutheranism that rates being written about. After all, MLMH is connected with the smaller Lutheran Synods, it has been around for a relatively short period of time and it has not expanded beyond the State of Michigan. Certainly the 25 year history of MLMH cannot be compared as an "event in American Lutheranism" with the proposed merger of the giant Lutheran church bodies in 1988 and yet, the formation of the Martin Luther Memorial Home Corporation was significant for at least these reasons.

First and foremost MLMH sees to the needs of people. That makes MLMH significant. Lutheran Christians have always been concerned about the needs of people. That is especially true of WELS Christians because their hearts have been touched by the pure Gospel of Christ. In response to that undeserved privilege WELS Christians have turned love into action through MLMH. Pastor Winfred Koelpin writes in a summary document presented at the 1965 dedication of the South Lyon Home, "The need to pay greater attention to the wants of the senior citizens in our midst was recognized by the congregations

of our Michigan District, Wisconsin Synod. As a result of this the Martin Lutheran Memorial Home Inc., came into being on April 16, 1958." MLMH was formed as a tangible response to the Gospel message. That makes its history as significant as any recorded throughout American Lutheranism.

Martin Lutheran Memorial Home is important because it has remained faithful to its stated purpose and objectives. The care given to people at the MLMH is not just an ideal written on paper. It is an actual fact experienced by hundreds of residents and families of residents every day of the year. I was involved in this "personal caring attitude" in a real way over the past several months. Both of my grandfathers drew their final breath under the care of MLMH. It was a blessing for me to know that when they could no longer care for themselves, or my family could no longer care for them, there was a warm place that could care for them- a place among Lutheran Christians who had the Gospel message to share. What a comfort to place our loved ones in a home that shared the same Christian goals, ideals, and philosophies as our own. What a blessing was there for our family when MLMH cared enough to expand its operation to South Haven, Michigan. Care was made available by MLMH in my own home town. The history of MLMH shows that it has remained faithful to its calling. That makes the history of Martin Luther Memorial Home a significant event in American Lutheranism.

The history of MLMH is also worth recording for Lutheran clergy- especially those in the Wisconsin Synod and ELS. Most pastors are involved directly or indirectly with the operation of a basic or skilled care home for the aged. Parishoners expect their pastor to know at least something about available Lutheran homes for the aged. The more a pastor has read about the history of MLMH, the more he will feel confident in recommending Martin Luther Memorial Home to members of his flock who may be in need of such services. Lutheran Christians will in turn be comforted to know that their pastor cares enough to be well informed on the matters of Lutheran Homes for the aged. This brief history of MLMH might serve as resource material for both pastors and laity who need or want to keep current on Lutheran Homes for the aged.

Introducing the Fictitious Historian of MLMH

The body of this paper which presents the essential history of Martin Luther Memorial Home takes the form of a personal letter. The author of this letter and the letter's recipient are fictitious persons, although the names, dates and facts discussed in the letter are (to the best of my knowledge) historically accurate. The reader will soon notice that by using a "personal letter" format, historical facts can be commented on through the eyes of a resident. This is important since the real history of MLMH is contained in the people who have served or been served in the homes. It is through their viewpoint that the history of Martin Luther Memorial Home comes alive.

Our fictitious historian, Mr. Dan Herzog, was one of the first residents brought into the South Lyon Home in March, 1965. He was 68 years old back then, and by most peoples' standards still pretty active in his Trinity, Saline church. Dan was active in the founding of MLMH from the first and he was truly looking forward to becoming a resident of the home. He knew he was slowing down. Besides, the thought of being with people again appealed to him- especially since his wife Emily had passed away. Dan told me that he had discussed the idea of a WEIS home for the aged with his friends many times prior to the time of the break up of the Synodical Conference.

Like so many others in WEIS, Dan was concerned about the joint mission and benevolent efforts carried on by the Synodical Conference. Would the Wisconsin Synod lose all its stake in its shared projects because it was the smaller church body? Dan began to look into these things. He became particularly interested in the nursing homes of the Synodical Conference. He found that the first nursing home in WEIS fellowship was founded at Brooklyn, New York in 1875. The home was known as Altenheim. By 1960, 15 such homes had been established within the framework of the Synodical Conference. These homes housed about 1,000 residents. I think that just that little bit of research gave Dan the grand idea to write out the history of MLMH. Dan's idea never died, and before he was gathered to his Heavenly Father's side, he achieved his goal. He wrote down the first 25 years of history of Martin Luther Memorial Home.



What I have to share with you is one of those long winded letters Dan sometimes wrote to his oldest son Dave who lives in Indianapolis. From the dates on the letter it seems that Dan had been working at this particular letter for about 4 months. It seems to have a lot of historical facts in it- and that might be dull to most people- but not to Dave. He loved history just like his dad. For Dan and Dave "like father like son" wasn't just an old saying. It was a fact.

Whenever Dave would visit they'd be down in the "smoking lounge" talking for hours about history. As you can imagine they'd usually end up talking about Dan's favorite kind of history- the history of MLMH. I suppose this might seem like a long-winded boring letter to some people, but I know Dan loved writing it, and I know Dave loved reading it. Since you've expressed an interest in getting to know more about the history of MLMH let me share Dan's letter with you. I don't think Dan would mind. In fact I think he'd be rather flattered to have you read it. I hope you find it as worthwhile as I did.

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To my dear number one son, Dave:

April 7, 1985

How are you? Fine I hope! I couldn't wait to finish this "letter" and get it off to you, although as you'll see, it's not really a letter in the usual sense. I finally did it! I actually took the time to write down the history of MLMH. This isn't the final "work of art" but I wanted to run most of my findings and comments by you before I finished the final draft. Obviously I'm hoping you'll give your old man rave reviews. If you don't like it, keep your comments to yourself or lie a little (or a lot if need be).

Well now, where should I begin? How about with the idea of MLMH, or any WELS home for the aged in Michigan for that matter. Whose original idea was it? I can imagine that lots of people had the idea (you know that as I think about it now it even crossed my mind a time or two), but the credit for having the original idea and doing something about it at the same time belongs to Pastor G.L. Press. No, I didn't just make that up. It's a matter of the written record.

There were "official" group discussions about a WELS home for the aged which followed in about November of 1957 in Saline, Michigan. During the winter months of 1957-58 regular (however informal) dis-

cussions were held. From these more or less informal meetings flowed more structured discussions about a WELS home for the aged. The first meeting at which minutes were kept seems to be an organizational meeting held on April 16, 1958. The first official association meeting was held on May 7, 1958. This was also the first meeting with available minutes. At that meeting roll call showed that 17 pastors and 26 delegates from 19 congregations were present. In all there were 65 interested persons from 27 different WELS congregations. A beautiful turn out! If initial turn-out was any indication we should have known that MLMH would be a big success. The Lord's blessings were evident from the very beginning.

#### How MLMH Received Its Name

You asked once how MLMH got its name. Turns out there was a story there when I looked into it. At the first meeting (May 7, 1958) the constitution committee proposed the names "Luther Memorial Home Inc." and "Twilight Lutheran Home" for the organization. Of the two, obviously, Luther Memorial Home was chosen. Mr. John Barr a lawyer from Detroit (and the first president of the Association) was chosen to take the name Luther Memorial Home Inc. to the State of Michigan for incorporation. As it turned out the name Luther Memorial Home was already being used by another group. Mr. Barr acted on instinct and added the word "Martin" on his own. The State O.K.'ed it, and the newly elected Board of Control loved it. Hence the name Martin Luther Memorial Home. God bless gifted laymen. I don't think I could have brought myself to enter a home named something like "Shady Lanes Rest Home."

#### The Birth of the New Home

It's difficult to pin a birthdate on the MLMH. Birthing a home for the aged is hardly anything like having a baby. If an "idea that lasted" was responsible for MLMH, then I suppose sometime in November, 1957 might be considered the birthday of MLMH. Others might argue for April 16, 1958- the date of the first official organizational meeting or May 7, 1958- the date of the meeting with the first <sup>existent</sup> minutes. If you're a legal buff, perhaps you'd like the date of June 16, 1958 as the birthday for MLMH. That is the date on the charter granted from the State of Michigan.

Still others might say that "talk is cheap" or "anybody can have a good idea" it's getting the idea off the ground that's important. "The real birthday of MLMH was at the ground breaking ceremony held April 26, 1964." Or if you're a construction engineer (and somewhat of a purist) you might consider February 22, 1963 as the true birthday for MLMH. What happened on that day? Test borings were taken. The less said about that last suggestion the better.

Some might propose that MLMH was really born the day it was completely ready to fulfill its intended function. If you're thinking along those lines, then March 15, 1965 is your date because that was the date of the final inspection of the South Lyon home. And finally if you have in mind the spiritual aspects of MLMH perhaps you'll hold to May 16, 1965 as MLMH's birthdate. That's the day Martin Luther Memorial Home was dedicated to the service of the Lord.

Although I think a good case could be made for just about any one of the dates, I guess I lean toward the date of dedication. After having watched the home develop from a one man idea into a home, the worship service held at the dedication sent chills of thanks and praise up and down my spine. At least for me I'll always feel that that was the day Martin Luther Memorial Home was really born. I remember May 16, 1965 like it was yesterday.

Stanford Walling played the organ (donated for the occasion courtesy of the Wayne Michigan Music Center). The mass choir directors were Mr. Richard Scharf and Mr. Ronald Kaiser. The choirs sang two selections, "Christ, Thou Art the Sure Foundation" and "The Heavens Declare Thy Glory, Lord." Simply uplifting! Still you know me. I think I enjoyed the opening hymn by the congregation most of all. "Now Thank We All Our God" has always been one of my favorites. I also thought that it was very appropriate that Pastor Press gave the dedication sermon, and Pastor Robert Mueller was the liturgist. Knowing how these men were connected to the home added just that special touch to the worship service. Dave, I wish you could have been there! It was a Spirit-filled thank offering for a lot of answered prayers.

It sounds so easy when you put it on paper. But of course it wasn't really that easy to make MLMH a reality. It took dedicated and talented men to make things happen. God in his wisdom provided such men. They just seemed to be in the right place at the right time. They seemed to have the knack for organizing the right committees

at just the proper moment. They seemed to elect just the right people to their committees. Some might call that "dumb luck" (something like evolution). I call it the Lord's hand of blessing (something like answered prayers). Let me share some of the details on how the Lord guided MLMH from "a nice idea" to "a thankful dedication".

### How MLMH Acquired Land for its Home

After initial planning and checking for interest for a WELS home for the aged, the Board was faced with the task of finding a suitable location for the home. Once again, the story of the home's land purchase reveals God's active hand of blessing. In a board meeting held on September 26, 1958, 5 possible building sites were suggested: 1. North of Saline; 2. East of Saline; 3. Northfield; 4. Whitmore Lake; and 5. Yale. By September 9, 1959 a plot of land in Willimston was also in the running.

After careful investigation, \$20,000 was offered for the 7.26 acre site at Whitmore Lake to Mr. A.J. Bennet the owner of the land. In November of 1959 he received a land purchase contract plus a check from the MLMH Association for \$100. The deal seemed set. However Mr. Bennet returned the check with a "thanks but no thanks" letter. A counter proposal of \$30,000 from MLMH fell flat on its face. It was "back to the drawing board".

That was a disheartening meeting. It let the wind out of a lot of people's sails, including my own. Was the Lord trying to tell us something? If so, what? About that time it was brought to the attention of the Board that an entire nursing home was up for sale in St. Joseph, Michigan. Should we build on our own or begin with that home? Meanwhile, other parcels of land were becoming available and were also being discussed as possible building sites. It was frustrating trying to decide which land was the one for us. But God knew the answer, and in His own time and way He revealed His plan to provide a site for the home.

Immanuel, South Lyon (a WELS congregation), had purchased land to construct a new church building. Three plots of land were designated for parking purposes. When this came to the attention of the MLMH Board it was resolved to make Immanuel congregation an offer for those plots of land. Pastor H. Hoenecke speaking on behalf of the

Board in a joint meeting held on April 1, 1960 made this proposal, "...that MLMH purchase the South Lyon property (which included a 2 year old brick house) for the total sum of \$22,750.

Immanuel Lutheran Church called a special meeting on May 8, 1960. The purpose of the meeting was: 1. call its own pastor; 2. sell (if approved) 3 of its lots of land to MLMH; (and I would add a third purpose according to what I read about the meeting) 3. discuss to what extent the new church and new home would be in cooperation. It was decided that Immanuel and the home would share parking facilities. The Immanuel pastor was free to serve as home chaplain, and the home would not have to build a separate chapel because Immanuel was so close. What would the home give in return? Free rental of the brick house on the land as a parsonage until the brick house would be needed as an administrative office building for MLMH. Now only one thing stood between MLMH and its much needed, long awaited parcel of land- ratification by the MLMH Association. I thought to myself, "no problem"! But there was still one twist left in the negotiations.

The Board, in a special meeting held on May 16, 1960 counter proposed the following, "that one-half of the brick house be used as a parsonage rent free for 3 years." Immanuel rejected the proposal after lengthy discussion. Finally it was agreed that MLMH would let Immanuel use the brick house as a parsonage for 5 years and a sum of money. In July, 1961 the arrangement was amended. MLMH agreed to pay the insurances for the brick house as well. It had been almost 3 years since MLMH was spawned as an idea and it would be 5 more years until the actual dedication of the home, but as of May 16, 1960 MLMH had a place to call "home". And that was an exciting feeling. It's quite something to see an idea- literally- take shape.

#### Financing MLMH

But I know you're a practical person, Dave. I can almost hear you asking yourself the \$64,000 dollar question. Where did the money come from to help shape this wonderful home? Good question. I'm glad you asked! The money to finance the home came from God's people who wanted to see "love your neighbor as yourself" take the shape of a WELS home for the aged. As of May 7, 1958 (remember that was the first official meeting of the Association) \$918.50 had been collected in

token support of the MLMH project. By June 5, 1959 that amount had increased to \$4,367. Be aware that these contributions were on hope alone at that point in time. Financially MLMH was totally dependent on direct contributions from gracious WELS Christians. We were thankful for every last penny. There was no doubt about that.

And yet if the MLMH was to become a reality something more was needed (humanly and financially speaking). The Board of Directors didn't have their heads in the sand. They understood that from the very beginning. The big practical question had always been- who was going to foot the bills? Already at that first meeting in May of 1957 the Board proposed to find a viable way to fund the home. Pastor Dan Gieschen of Adrian was chosen to lead the way in that regard.

The plan was that Pastor Gieschen would petition the Synod for a portion of the "Belle Plain Funds". At that time the fund held \$45,907, and there was a trust fund of \$33,362. The request for funds was to be directed to the General Synodical Committee which would meet in Milwaukee in May of 1958. From this petitioning it was discovered that the General Synod Committee could not release any funds without approval from the General Synodical body which would not meet until August of 1959. On June 5, 1959 in a preliminary meeting the General Synodical Committee proposed the following: "...that the WELS establish a fund for homes for the aged to be made available on an equal basis to the Western Wisconsin District, the Northern Wisconsin District and the Michigan District.

That preliminary proposal made MLMH skiddish. Getting money through Synod was one thing, being under a Synod board of control was another thing entirely. It wasn't that the MLMH Board didn't want to be answerable as to how they might spend the Synod's money. It was more that MLMH had an appreciation for its autonomy and felt that they could best serve the people in their district under their own guidance. You know I don't have anything against our Synod's machinery- well not much anyway- but in this situation I whole-heartily agreed with MLMH's decision to politely refuse to get involved in the General Synod Committee's proposal. It was a very difficult decision for MLMH at the time. They certainly need<sup>ed</sup> money to get started. But the Lord blessed their decision as the subsequent financial history of the home bears out.

Oh yes, just as a brief side light- in case you're wondering if

that was the end of cooperation between Minnesota's Belle Plain and Michigan's MLMH- it wasn't. In May of 1962 the Superintendent of Belle Plain wrote a very helpful letter to MLMH explaining some of the things to watch out for in constructing a home for the aged. Of course there have been meetings where Belle Plain and MLMH have had a chance to discuss mutual interests. It's nice to have an older brother help you take your first faltering steps in the right direction

The loss of the Belle Plain Fund still left the question about funding the home. One idea that was offered in October of 1960 was for the promotional committee to sell Christmas seals. Nice idea, but it would take a lot of Christmases to get the home paid for that way. The Christmas seal idea was dropped about a year later.

On April 7, 1961 an idea was proposed to try and get an F.H.A. loan from the Government. As with most Government funds it was discovered that there were strings attached to the deal. Any Government funding would require that the Government be in control of who enters the home. In addition, in order to qualify for the Government F.H.A. loan, there would have to be at least one kitchen in each of the room units. No central kitchen would be allowed. This would boost the cost of building the home substantially. And that type of set-up did not appeal to the MLMH planning committee. I'm sure you get the picture. Government money means Government involvement. Not good. Especially when you consider how MLMH had guarded its autonomy in connection with Synod. Clearly the F.H.A. loan was not the way to go. God was leading MLMH down another financial path- a path of eventual financial freedom and relative stability.

In a special meeting called to discuss the financing of the new home (held on September 24, 1962), Mr. Emanuel Marion gave the current financial status of MLMH and brought forward options for financing the home (his presentation followed a fine presentation entitled: "Why We Should Build a Home" by Mr. Ray Spencer). At any rate, as of that meeting the general fund had \$6,335, the savings \$7,487. MLMH held land and buildings worth \$23,200. Total assets were \$37,472.

Four financial plans were introduced. First, borrow one-half the money needed on a mortgage. The rest would be paid by the congregations in the Association. Second, receive a loan from an insurance company with F.H.A. backing at 5.75%. Third, a bond issue would be used. Fourth, have an underwriting service of a Chicago agency take

care of figuring out a way to finance the home. As you can imagine the discussions got pretty technical. I'm not pretending to understand the plusses and minusses of each plan. Which one would you choose? Of course it wasn't easy for the Board to make up its mind in one night. True to form the Association chewed all the options well before swallowing anything. Nothing definite was decided about finances that night, but the Board did decide to set a ground breaking date- April 1, 1963.

Even though financing the project was getting to be a strain at that point, I felt uplifted just knowing that there was a definite target date for ground breaking. As it turned out financing the home was more difficult than anticipated. Ground breaking did not take place on April 1, 1963. But that wasn't all bad. It gave the Board more opportunity to examine financial options. The delay gave time for a special collection from the congregations in the Association on behalf of MLMH. And besides, who wants to break ground for a building project on April Fools Day? No thanks. I can wait until the time is right. In His faithfulness the Lord did bring that joyful moment of ground breaking. MLMH did want to be on firm financial footing by that time. As it turned out it was worth the wait.

Following a special presentation on bond issues (on April 26, 1963) by the B.C. Siegler Company and the American Finance Church Company, it was settled that a bond issue plan would be best. But how exactly to go about it? On September 27, 1963 Mr. Ford Prince and Mr. Jack Flanagan presented a bond issue plan based on life insurance. The plan called for MLMH to buy 50 life insurance policies for its residents. This plan was adopted.

A \$500,000 bond issue at a cost of \$13,800 was put into effect by Institutional Investment Company of America out of Fort Worth, Texas. That was in January 1964. The Board decided that the largest bond that any single congregation could purchase would be \$25,000. As of April 10, 1964 more than \$180,000 in bonds had been sold. Financially things looked great for the first time in a long time. However there was still murky water up ahead.

By July 31, 1964 bond sales had ground to a halt. That was a real problem since by resolution \$225,000 worth of bonds had to be sold by October 1, 1964 in order to begin construction of the home. This problem was made known to the congregations and the bond goal



achieved in time. However in order to "clinch" the remaining bond sales, Mr. Bill Merrill of Dayton, Ohio was brought in (at a cost of \$7,500) to sell the remaining bonds. That was in March, 1965 just before the home opened its doors. Financially everything had worked itself out. Thank God for that, not just the salesmen. The Michigan District added icing on the cake by passing a resolution to this effect: "The Michigan District cannot say that the MLMH is theirs, but, be it resolved, that all congregations heartily support the home." MLMH had won a long hard financial battle. But the victory was the Lord's. Again thank God!

I hope you're not thinking that it's a waste of time and energy to write a detailed account of MLMH's financial history. I guess I looked into it for a reason. I've always wondered why MLMH has been able to expand its areas of service while other homes seem to struggle along financially. The answer I found was not some "secret" financial schemes that paid off for MLMH. Instead I discovered that MLMH did its research well before it made any decisions and the Lord was there to bless those decisions.

From the start there were people who said that MLMH was a noble idea but beyond financial reality. I admit that I had my doubts on occasion too. But knowing the financial history of MLMH has helped me mature in my trust in the Lord. The Lord gives blessings in His own way and in His own time. His arm is not too short to save in the MLMH financial situation nor in any situation. As I look back over the financial development of MLMH, I see the natural guiding process of the Lord. I know now that the long hours of planning, waiting, and wondering over the financial status of the home developed a more consistent prayer life for myself and others. Would that same blessing have resulted had the financial status been secure from the beginning? I think there's a valuable lesson to be learned from the financial history of MLMH. I guess that's why I wanted to spend some time with it. I hope you forgive my sermonizing.

#### The Building of MLMH

The fact of the matter is that residents can't live on a pile of money. They need a building. Some place to call "home". The planning of the physical plant of MLMH began almost immediately upon

incorporation. In the December 5, 1958 meeting Pastor Walter Kleinhaus was called on to give a report about the homes he had had experience with. In his report Pastor Kleinhaus suggested individual private rooms of 11x14 feet. He envisioned 3 employees in the home at first (this arrangement was preferred by the State of Michigan). There would be 1 person for paper work, 1 nurse and 1 physical therapist. This was not meant to be a comprehensive report, however, it served a valuable purpose of getting the ball rolling in planning the actual building after the site was secured.

By July 15, 1960 an Engineering-Architectural committee was appointed. This committee was made up of 3 men- Ken Kemp, Lionel Viau, and Dr. C.C. Miller. They were to gather ideas on the type of home to be built. Chelsea, Michigan was the first place visited. After 10 months of investigating nursing homes and looking for good ideas, the Board replaced the Engineering-Architectural committee with the Architect Interviewing committee. Mr. Maurice Ellicott was the chairman of the new committee. Mr. Ellicott immediately began to write letters to several architect firms. In a meeting on July 7, 1961 the Board of Control interviewed 7 different architect firms. Using a prepared interview sheet and after lengthy discussion, Begrow and Brown from Birmingham, Michigan were awarded the architect contract on a close 6-4 vote. It was a difficult but momentous decision. Once more the Lord blessed that decision.

From that moment on MLMH felt like a reality to me. I was genuinely excited that we had an architect firm. It didn't even bother me when Begrow and Brown asked for \$2,000 up front plus 6% of the total cost of the project. And all that money for signing a contract, a topographical survey, schematic drawings, and an alternative drawing. It showed me that Begrow and Brown meant business! I liked that. But what I liked even more was that the MLMH Board formed a finance committee on the spot (headed by Mr. Bill Sheel) and a building committee (headed by Mr. John Barr). MLMH made an immediate counter proposal to Begrow and Brown of \$750. To my surprise Begrow and Brown took the offer. MLMH meant business too! I really liked that. August 2, 1961 was a day to remember.

In another special meeting held on November 10, 1961 the Association investigated 3 different preliminary options presented by the architects. In August of 1962 Mr. Jack Brown, one of the architects,

presented a more detailed plan for single occupancy rooms. The home decided to go with only 1 wing single occupancy rooms. Back to the drawing board, Jack. Finally by October Mr. Brown presented drawing specifications and a scale model of the home. Much better! Then in November a 20x24 foot workshop area in the basement was discussed. The workshop would cost \$26,000 which would bring the estimated total cost of the building up to \$411,000. Workshop- defeated. There just had to be a limit. Nevertheless it was nice to know that, for the most part, things were falling nicely into place as far as the actual building was concerned. In fact after November, 1962 there were only minor changes made in the physical plant of the home.

At the annual meeting mid-April, 1964 contractors were named for the home. I can't resist the urge to list them. Kitchen Builders, General Contractors; Griffen Company, Mechanical contractors; Weber Electric Company, Electric Contractors. Once the building contracts were set, things really began to move. As has been mentioned before ground breaking ceremonies were held on April 26, 1964. That was a significant occasion as I'm certain you realize. And although it might not seem like a significant part of the building project, the sign for MLMH which identified the building project was put up in June, 1964. That 4x8 foot sign (that cost \$100) stood tall in my mind. Whenever I drove by the construction site the view of that little sign would send my heart a-thumpin'. The Martin Luther Memorial Home was rising in reality. God's blessings were becoming visible after 6 years of work!

The building of MLMH was like watching a miracle in slow motion. But it was a miracle just the same. I used to drive by every chance I could to see the progress of the home. I often visualized the home in final form. All the residents were there- happy, content, knowing that the Lord had provided for them in the past and would continue to do so. I would sometimes visualize myself as one of the residents, watching the Tiger's game with friends, playing cards or just visiting. At first it wasn't easy to see myself in that situation but then the idea of living in the home sort of grew on me. Well I better quit day-dreaming and get back to business. Now where was I? Oh yes...

The actual construction of the home began on May 16, 1964. The foundation and groundwork were completed before the cornerstone cer-

emony took place on October 25, 1964. Pastor H.L. Engel of Saline was the guest speaker at that event. I tried to find out what was put in the cornerstone but I could only discover what was suggested to be placed in the cornerstone. These are a list of the items: a record of all memorials, a constitution, the names of all past officers and board members, the names of member congregations, the history of the home since its inception, and investment study and fact sheet, one bond, and the service bulletin from the cornerstone ceremonies. That's a nice size list.

But no matter what actually found its way into the cornerstone of the building, the building progressed smoothly. As of November the 20th the driveway and parking lot were complete. Meanwhile there were ongoing discussions about the type and price of furnishings to be used in the home. By January 8, 1965 the doors were hung, there was paint on the inside of the home, the plumbing was finished and it was predicted that all would be complete by February 1. They didn't quite make it though. There turned out to be roof leaks in D wing, the doors weren't hung properly, and carpeting was placed in the entrance. The plans called for a tile floor in the entrance. These flaws were of course relatively minor and were easily rectified without incident. The home seemed to materialize without a hitch. The furnishings were delivered on February 19 along with the dishes for the kitchen. After that it really did look like a real home. A "work bee" was held on March 6 to clean up the place and put on the finishing touches. A final inspection took place on March 15, and for all practical purposes, MLMH was ready to receive its first residents. The dedication on May 16, 1965 made MLMH a God-blessed reality. No amount of words can tell the feeling of joy and accomplishment. Almost 8 years of planning stood as a completed fact before my very eyes. It was quite a spring.

#### Publicizing MLMH

The job of making MLMH a known and attractive entity was given to the publicity committee. Without residents the organized brick and glass would have remained useless. MLMH needed to be teaming with residents if it was to become a home. Where would the residents come from? Would they take advantage of MLMH? These questions and similar potential problems were headed off by the much needed publicity commit-

tee. The Board wisely did not hesitate to publicize the home even while it was an idea in the very beginning stages. Adequate and proper promotion techniques were essential for congregation support and consistent overall growth.

As early as December 4, 1959 the publicity committee decided to place "contact men" in every congregation in the district. One of the early promotional materials sent out was entitled "Sunrise at Sunset". As chairman of the publicity committee Pastor Koelpin was primarily responsible for that brochure which was distributed during the Lenten Season of 1960. As time went on the job of promoting the home became more demanding. Pastor Koelpin took sick, so in July of 1961 Mr. Sheel was asked to help Pastor John Westendorf on the publicity committee. "Promotion" was no longer a one or two man part time job!

By January 1962 a list of congregations interested in seeing a "MLMH presentation" were drawn up. Then in March Pastor Westendorf received a call to Wisconsin. Pastor Robert Mueller took over as head of the publicity just as things were getting untracked. The publicity committee was responsible for preparing a display for the Michigan District Convention held on June 11, 1962 in Saginaw. In August the committee resolved to print a quarterly newsletter for the home. Later in September they decided to establish a ladies auxiliary in each member congregation. Each congregation would have a contact woman for the home, a MLMH branch, and a special speaker for fall and spring meetings. The Ladies Auxiliary for MLMH was officially formed on October 30, 1964. But for MLMH and the publicity committee 1962 was a big year for growth behind the scenes.

Of course the promotional pace for the home slowed down later on but it never became stagnate. There was always something to do. In April, 1963 a questionnaire was prepared and sent to all pastors in the district inquiring about potential residents for MLMH. In November, 1964 a layman's talk was prepared and sent to the congregations. That talk was one of the important human elements that eventually filled the home. After January 1965 the promotional committee made 3 sets of slides about MLMH and began to distribute them. Word about the actual building in South Lyon spread. There was true enthusiasm in the air. As a fitting "finale" to publicizing the home Pastor Koelpin and Mr. Dittmar were asked to provide a promotional-historical booklet for the May 16, 1965 dedication of the home.

The little green 19 page dedication booklet is a work of art. It certainly rates a brief description especially since it is an historical document. I read through it many times. It provides a brief history of MLMH up to the dedication service. It has the dedication service bulletin printed right in it. There is a helpful description of MLMH for those who may have never been lucky enough to see the home in person. To top it all off there are a fine collection of pictures in the booklet which are worth at least 1,000 words each. The booklet contains a statement on "Our Christian Duty to the Aged" along with a list of the 41 member congregations at the time of the dedication. Finally there is a list of requirements for entrance into the home itself as a resident. The booklet is concise yet helpful and valuable. If you ever see a copy of it when you're visiting the home- spend some time with it! By the way I don't get a commission on booklet sales. I just think it's a nice piece of work.

The history of MLMH from 1957-1965 is a story of amazing grace. When I think back on how the Lord pulled together all the elements of planning, financing, building, and promoting a project of that scale, I simply marvel at our God. Consider all the volunteer time and energy spent on behalf of MLMH even before its first resident went through the doors. People's hearts could have easily grown cold in that time before the home was built. It might have been easy for people to give up along the way but they didn't. Instead MLMH was blessed with dedicated workers and contributors who hung in there all the way and saw the job through to completion.

Our God has not set up a rigid set of rules which must be complied to in response to the Gospel message. Christians are free to offer thankful service to God any way they see fit. But God is certainly there to bless every form of Gospel motivated thankfulness. The entire MLMH project is an example of that fact. For example (and more specifically) I'm thinking about the way in which the individual rooms in the home were furnished. Each separate room in the home was financed by an individual congregation or groups within a congregation. Didn't that idea add a "homey" touch to MLMH for both resident and contributor? I think so. Whenever I enter a room, I check the plaque to see who contributed the furnishings. It gives me a chance to think about that fellow group of Christians and appreciate their love for me- even though I might never meet them on this earth. I plan on

thanking a lot of people when I get to heaven. That was one of the wonderful things about MLMH even before it cared for its first resident. The building of the home gave a lot of Christians an opportunity to say, "I care about you" or "thank you Lord for having people care about me" even if they never met. Aren't God's ways amazing?

#### The Operation of MLMH Following Dedication

Obviously the history of MLMH changed dramatically after the residents arrived in May, 1965. There were 23 residents in the beginning but that number grew rapidly. By June 25th there were 33 residents in the home (the first 2 deaths were recorded that month as well). One month later the number of residents was up to 41. Then it went to 57. By the end of October there were 71 residents with only a few semi-private rooms left. Let me tell you, things were really moving in those first few months. Finally the number of residents peaked in January, 1966 at 74 (just 9 months after opening). The maximum number of residents possible at that time was 79.

The number of residents in the home tells you something about the history of MLMH but it's really only the tip of the iceberg. Another aspect of the home that helps paint a picture of life at MLMH in the early days is the "food story". The first official meal served in the home was a "kitchen test" meal served on April 30th, 1965. It was a special meal served for the members of the board and committees, the City Council, City Editor, City Attorney and their wives. Since you've eaten at the home, you know that the food is always a special treat. In the beginning Mrs. Duncan ordered the food from George Miesel and Son Company. It was what happened to the food after it arrived that made it special though.

Meal time has always been an important time here in the home just like it is in any American home (the menu in the appendix can't tell the whole story of course). Some things have changed with the meals over the years. No, the food is still great. It's just served different now. For the first 10 years everything was served family style. After that they switched to tray service. I suspect the change had something to do with those pesky Government regulations that crop up like weeds around here. The H.F.A. care residents have their food trays delivered directly by kitchen staff. That's a nice

touch. It's easy to see that the kitchen staff cares about the meals they serve and the residents themselves.

We have a 10:00 a.m. and a 2:00 p.m. snack if we care to. And although we can't have food in our room (for fear of mice or worse), we can make special requests to the kitchen and that's super. Breakfast seems to be the favorite meal of the day around here. Oh sure there are the typical complaints about the food. But I suspect that most of the complainers will keep right on complaining in heaven too. I don't let their outlook spoil my meal. Besides there are always residents who are appreciative about the food. Jo Decker for one. She's been here for more than 17 years without complaint. In fact she seems to downright enjoy herself every day.

The kitchen has always been on the lookout to improve itself. When the budget allows, they update equipment. They've always had top-notch help. Mildred Gunn's been in and out of the kitchen since the home began serving meals. Mrs. Braun's been in the kitchen since 1971 and has been the head of the kitchen since 1976 or 77. Thanks to good old Government regulations she's had to take classes to stay on as head cook and dietician- but it's been worth it. She seems to have adjusted and doesn't appear to be any worse for wear. As of 1985 the home now has a 4- cycle dinner schedule and a chef. Guess what? No one is really starving to death here. MLMH has never missed serving a meal yet, and that's a lot to be thankful for.

#### Some Physical Changes in MLMH After Dedication

Over the years there have been many physical changes in the home since it was built. One of the first additions was the shuffle board court approved in April, 1966. Some changes came about because of donations. The home's first lawn mower and T.V. were donations. But there were larger changes as well. As of September 1, 1965 Immanuel Lutheran Church no longer was using the MLMH's brick home as a parsonage. The MLMH corporation was already growing and the space was needed.

In May, 1966 it was discussed whether the home should be converted to handle only convalescent residents. This "proposal" was defeated, but it shows that MLMH was thinking in terms of change. On August 30, 1966 the home purchased the land of Mr. Ed Nugent to have



better access<sup>to</sup> the South Lyon property. \$1,850 closed the deal. MLMH was growing in many different ways. In November of 1966 the Veterans Organization added a flag pole to the list of changes. In late 1967 the Civil Defense Department asked to use the basement for food storage and a radio transmission center in case of emergency. That did change the view somewhat for the residents. The Civil Defense Department built a 40 and 30 foot radio transmission tower. One minor (and yet not so minor) change took place in February, 1968. The phone system was updated to receive 2 calls at the same time. You can guess who didn't consider that a minor change at all. And finally, August 1968 saw the addition of a much needed ice machine. Yes, MLMH was getting absolutely modern.

But let me back up about a year or so to April, 1967. That's when a big decision to expand the home was reached. A building project was needed because the number of residents was still growing. After 1½ years of operation there were 76 residents, 23 of them required full time nursing care. The home was only equipped to handle 20 full time nursing care residents legally. The State said that 3 people had to leave the home and that hurt!

The goals of the building program were adopted as follows:

1. Complete the second floor of the administration wing;
2. renovate the examination room;
3. put in a nurses call system, speakers and amplifier system;
4. build a garage for home use.

The project would again be funded by bonds. This time \$85,000 worth of bonds were to be sold at 6% over a 20 year period. As with the original building project Kitchen Builders were the general contractors. \$10,000 worth of furniture was needed to put into the new rooms. Once again those furnishings were donated by various groups who had an interest in the home. This second building project was completed on January 31, 1968 and was dedicated to the Lord's service on May 1 that same year.

I'm not saying that everything went perfect with the building decisions. The dryers wore out too soon, the roof still leaked, screens were needed to keep glaring sun out of the dining area, but for the most part- once again- the MLMH planners and builders came up smelling like roses. One thing seemed certain from the outset. MLMH aimed to serve by expansion. They set goals for themselves. They weren't content to rest on accomplishments gone by. Even before this second building project was complete, Pastor Kuske suggested that MLMH

look into establishing another home in the Northern Conference of the Michigan District. Positive change has always been the name of the game for Martin Luther Memorial Home.

### Some Rules and Regulations in the Home

Another type of history (besides its physical history) is the home's "rules and regulations" history. If you know anything about how Government operates- and I'm sure you do- then you know that MLMH was pushed, pressed, and influenced to act and react in certain ways simply because of Government rules and regulations. It was inevitable. Pastor Schroeder was the first man assigned the duty of regulating MLMH. In March 1965 the board of control asked him to set up house rules effecting residents and employees. Thus began a long and formidable list of changes in the home brought on through Government regulations. One of the most infamous of which was issued to the home in January, 1968. The State came in and said that the home didn't have enough lighting in the nurse quarters or enough ventilation. When MLMH moved to correct the problems, they were told that it was all a mistake. There was no code violation. It was business as usual.

Ever since the moment of incorporation a pitched battle with Government regulation has been waged. Sometimes successfully. Sometimes not so successfully. Once in awhile the Association would uncover a helpful law. Then the Government would counter with a potentially troublesome law as they did in September of 1963. That's when MLMH received its Federal Identification number. MLMH was not a home trying to help the aged it was "38-6076645". On August 2, 1961 the Board was informed by Pastor Mueller of this brief but potent Government regulation, "Government insists on close observation of erection and management of the Home. There are to be no restrictions in regard to race, creed, or color."

One positive ruling came to the home in July of 1965. The I.R.S. officially granted tax exempt status to MLMH. But the following addendum was attached: "In the event of dissolution of the Corporation all assets, real or personal shall be distributed to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod." Later on September 24th the words were added "and to State of Michigan". Those last words took a little

swallowing to get down- but they went down.

On August 30, 1966 the home contributed \$100 to the Michigan Nursing Association for efforts on behalf of all nursing homes in Washington D.C. In December of 1966 the MLMH employees decided to opt out of the Social Security program. This decision had a large impact on the home. MLMH now had a larger role to play in providing retirement benefits for its employees as well as keeping those policies up to date so that they could attract employees in future years. Rules and regulations will always play a major role in homes like MLMH. I just wish it didn't have to be that way.

I'm not saying that all Government rules are unnecessary or even bad. There are homes who would not care for their residents properly without the long arm of the law resting on their shoulders. But there is still something about Government regulation that sticks in my throat. This is our home for the aged. We built it. MLMH is trying to care for its residents whom they truly love in Christ. Why should there have to be an unseen innate watchdog barking at our heels? Thank the Lord he gave patient gifted men to speak to the Government authorities on behalf of MLMH. Men more understanding than myself. Maybe I should look on the bright side more often. Uncle Sam has given us some helpful laws and suggestions on how to make MLMH a better tool for service to the residents. For that I'm thankful.

#### The Early Staff of MLMH

The loving, caring, sincere, and homespun atmosphere certainly come from rules and regulations. That spirit came from a genuine Christian concern for human beings. That spirit of MLMH flowed out of the personnel connected with the home from the very beginning. The process of gathering dedicated skilled staff members began on January 29, 1965. The board of control appointed a worker-interviewing committee (which also took over reviewing applicants for the home). That committee consisted of Mr. Sheel, Pastor Robert Mueller, Jake Brinks, and A.H. Baer. The Lord was certainly with that group of men.

The Lord led them to Leona Westendorf who became the first administrator and nursing supervisor of the home on March 12, 1965. Dave, I can only hope you've had an opportunity to meet Mrs. Westendorf because words cannot describe her dedication nor her caring attitude.

Leona started MLMH off on the right foot in every sense of the word. She was the first in<sup>a</sup> long list of dedicated employees at the home. For her, serving MLMH was not a matter of figuring up if you were reimbursed for every minute of work you did. Or figuring out if you got gas mileage for each and every special trip on behalf of the home or one of the residents. Serving the home was a matter of doing what it took to get the job done right- and enjoying it. Getting a pay check was a practical necessity not a goal in and of itself.

When I think of person~~nel~~ at the home that really gave it a good positive spirit, I think of Mr. Emanuel Marion who spent many hours birthing a bookkeeping system that would work for the new home. I can't help but think of the many hours of service given to the home by Board and committee members, particularly Pastor Robert Mueller. It was not unusual for meetings in those first years to run past midnight. In fact the May 28 meeting of 1965 finished after 2:00 a.m. Only one meeting is recorded with no "new business". The secretary added a note with just a hint of sarcasm or perhaps simple incredulity which reads, "Even Mr. Sheel had no new business to bring up."

The staff of MLMH had to endure many changes in staff positions in those early years. It seemed that just when someone would get the hang of one job they'd be promoted or asked to put their talents to work in an other area of service. Mr. Sheel immediately comes to mind. He served so well in so many capacities it was hard to keep track of him in the minutes. After<sup>working</sup> faithfully on many committees as a volunteer Mr. Sheel was elected Administrator of the home on July 17, 1967. (Mrs. Westendorf had to give up her administrator position for the sake of her Director of Nursing duties.) In 1970 Mr. Sheel was moved to full time treasurer of the MLMH organization. Bill Sheel served the home in any way he could. He was part of the task force in those early years that gave MLMH its spirit. Mr. Sheel was a great blessing to the home until he was taken to be with his Lord in October, 1980.

The person~~el~~ at the home grew rapidly in those early years because of the rapid growth in all areas of the home. Mrs. Nora Schroeder was placed as the first occupational therapist in July, 1966. Also at that time a part time R.N. was added to help Mrs. Westendorf. Even a second janitor was needed. St. Paul's, Livonia had the honor of supplying Mr. Herb Draper as janitor to the home in January, 1968.

The office was growing as well. In January, 1968 the treasurer;

bookkeeper, and administrator jobs were split. Mrs. Esther Travis was hired full time in October of that year to help in the office. As of November 1, 1968 MLMH had 58 employees and only 15 of them were part time. The Lord was gathering a second family in the home besides the residents themselves. And wasn't that wonderful? I think the best summary of the MLMH staff that I've ever read or heard was written in a report to the Michigan District Convention held in Saginaw in June of 1966: "...the entire staff is constantly sacrificing, donating their personal time and funds, and going out of their way to help residents and our home."

If you think I've given a "rose colored glasses" view of the home so far- so be it. But that's what the written record states and I've talked with so many people about it that it's an undeniable fact that MLMH cares for people as people. Sorry if that disappoints you. I personally find it refreshing to see a group of dedicated Christians living and working together and having things turn out very nicely for the most part. Once again I'm not denying that MLMH has its problems. It's not suprising to me to know that where people serve a Savior who forgives bitterness, envy, or any break down in love, there will be success and happiness.

#### Expanded Worship Opportunities at MLMH

Providing meaningful worship opportunities for residents for those in the home is a big part of what MLMH is all about. Shortly after dedication ceremonies Pastor George Tiefel of Immanuel, South Lyon was officially called as Chaplain of the home. His responsibilities were to conduct worship services periodically, visit residents, give Lord's Supper when requested and, provide devotional materials. It became evident that many of the residents preferred to stay and worship in the home rather than venture out to nearby Immanuel Church. Regular Sunday services were added in the home. By 1970 average attendance grew to 65 for the Sunday services. Lord's Supper was offered once a month on Sunday and one Wednesday a month.

In May of 1966 an altar was built for the home by Salem Lutheran Brotherhood. Even the local Catholic church donated their Wurlitzer organ. That was in January of 1967 when they built their new church. In March of 1968 a loud speaker system enabled more residents to hear the Word of God. By 1970 daily devotions were conducted on a regular

basis by the Administrator. In 1971 even an experimental Saturday evening service was added. In 1972 male residents were chosen to read the Scriptures at breakfast. By 1973 seven Friday afternoon vesper services were conducted in the home. Mrs. Freda Gale, a resident, began to take care of the communion records. Everyone was working together to provide the MLMH family plenty of opportunity to keep healthy and grow in the Spirit even if that was no longer possible in the body. MLMH was a great place to be for a lot of reasons but its hard to find a better reason than the chance to learn more about the Savior on a regular basis.

#### Special Activities and Special People at MLMH

Volunteer help was abundant in the home from the start. There were many people who helped with the Fall and Spring Party and the annual Ice Cream Social held in July. The Ladies Auxiliary officially began on January 1, 1966 but had had many individuals active the home prior to that time. In 1966 a bazaar helped collect over \$1,000 for the home. A Fall Fair in 1967 netted over \$1,200 for the home. In May, 1968 the "kitchen club" was formed. They suggested and were instrumental in getting a canopy outside for the benefit of the residents. March of '68 brought the introduction of the "Adopt a Grandparent" program. In May of that same year 27 residents were taken to Senior Citizens Day during Michigan Week. By 1974 the volunteer hours had increased from 50 a month to over 500 a month! It's difficult not to see blessings like that.

MLMH was getting to be known, and people were beginning to take advantage of what was there. Volunteers learned to recognize many friendly and appreciative faces. The list of people waiting to be taken into the home grew steadily. And even an agreement between MLMH and WLCFS in Milwaukee was struck. In the event WLCFS opened a branch office in the area, they could use one-half of the brick home rent free. So many people contributed their talents and love to make MLMH a "real home" that it seems almost unfair to name some people or groups of people knowing you're leaving so many others out. But what I've tried to say is that the history of the home is not just made at meetings, on the construction site, or in a staff meeting. There is real history in the home itself- in the activities- in the volunteers- and in the residents themselves.

For example I remember Mrs. Huegel. Everyone called her "Grandma". She came to the home in March, 1966. She was the first resident over 100 years old. I think of Mr. and Mrs. Otterbach who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in the home in October, 1967. Pastor Erhardt Schultz addressed the happy couple and conducted a special worship service. People still talk of that historic event today.

Those first years of MLMH were exciting. 1957-1969 were years of learning too. There were many changes and yet the Lord guided everything for the overall good of the home. The first 12 years of the existence of MLMH Association was an era. The years that follow are in a real sense completely different. When MLMH went into a multi-home operation things were never the same. That doesn't mean they were less exciting. It just means they were different. I will not be able to give the details I'd like on each home. Time simply doesn't permit me to do so. I will do my best to hit the "high spots" which directly affected the MLMH Corporation as a whole. Perhaps some day someone will write an individual history on each of the homes I certainly hope so!

#### The Purchase of the Holt Home

The first home addition to the MLMH in South Lyon was located in Holt, Michigan. The Holt home was founded by the Throop family in February, 1959. The Throop family purchased an existing 21 bed home and brought it up to nursing home standards. This operation was expanded to 66 beds in December, 1962. Over the years 16 beds were added to the facility by rearranging the rooms of the existing facility. In 1969 an addition was built which included a second dining room, a beauty shop, storage, and office space, an additional lounge, and 6 more beds. The Holt home now has a total of 82 nursing home beds.

On July 26, 1970 a special meeting was held to consider acquiring the Holt home. The Holt home was essentially to be a 1.5 million dollar donation to MLMH. Mr. William Van Duzer gave the report on the Holt home. \$56,000 was needed to bring the home to code. A favorable verdict to purchase was given by the Board on December 13, 1970. However the entire deal was not finalized until December 30, 1971. Taking over an existing home takes time. Especially when it is a home that is geared specifically for skilled care. There are more em-

ployees, more supplies to inventory, more admissions, and special procedures to master before a smooth take over can be accomplished. Thankfully Carl E. Throop stayed on as administrator to help with the transition process. The Holt home was dedicated to the service of the Triune God on May 21, 1972. Pastor Fred Zimmerman was called as Chaplain for the Holt home. In just 7 years of existence MLMH had doubled its capacity to serve. But the Lord had even more blessings in store for MLMH.

### The Purchase of the Saginaw Home

Back in 1968 it was already generally agreed that MLMH should look into expansion. By October, 1969 a debate was taking place as to purchasing an existing home or building a home from scratch. "Feel-ers" were already out about where a home might be built or acquired. Saginaw became a likely spot to build a home. (MLMH even offered \$31,000 for a 31.2 acre site known as the Hauman Land.) Meanwhile a study was being conducted by a MLMH committee on the feasibility of buying a home in Saginaw, known as the Heritage Home. Mr. Thomas Conzelman was the head of that committee. MLMH decided to purchase a home instead of building. A committee was set up to investigate the Heritage Home facilities, the person<sup>n</sup>el, reputation, and other aspects of the home. After much negotiations over a long period of time conducted primarily by Mr. Marion, Mr. Woldt, Pastor Mueller, Pastor Baer, and Mr. Barr, the MLMH Board authorized the purchase agreement on December 18, 1972. MLMH in Saginaw began operation on August 15, 1973.

Robert Eberhardt was the first administrator of the Saginaw home. Pastor Lynn A. Schroeder was the home's first Chaplain. It was a difficult beginning but the home progressed both physically as well as spiritually. Physically, Mr. Eberhardt undertook aggressive goals to achieve higher service levels in all areas. Job descriptions were written for all person<sup>n</sup>el and volunteers. An orientation program was developed for both family of residents and the residents themselves. In September of 1973 there were 57 residents. By the end of the year there were 67. (The Saginaw home serves 71 residents at full capacity.) The Lord's blessings have always been evident at the Saginaw home but perhaps not as evident as in those early years after it was acquired by MLMH.



Spiritually speaking (as well as humanly speaking) Pastor Schroeder had a big job on his hands. There were only 8 WELS members in the Saginaw home. In January of 1974 Pastor Schroeder began his work in the home by conducting worship services on a regular basis. Between 30 and 40 people attended the services. Pastor Schroeder conducted personal visitations with all residents to determine if they were being served spiritually. He reported that he had many opportunities to present the saving Gospel message during those visits. I have no doubt but that the Lord was faithful to his promise, "My word shall not return to me void..."

#### Meanwhile Back at the South Lyon Home

During the years of gaining two new homes nothing was stagnating in South Lyon. On January 1, 1970 the South Lyon home distributed its care for the residents into a 3 category system (retirement, basic, and skilled care). By July 1 of that year they had a new administrator, Mr. Alfons Woldt. 2 lots of land were purchased near the home, and a private home for the administrator was built. The land holdings of MLMH increased in a not so conventional way in 1970 as well. 20 ~~lots~~ grave lots in the Glen Eden Memorial Cemetery were donated to the South Lyon home. An unusual donation perhaps, but still appreciated. (As I've mentioned before Mr. Sheel was moved to apply his skills as the treasurer for the home. Mr. Woldt had to apply himself to passing the new state H.F.A. administrators license examination. He did pass, and by February 1971 South Lyon had its first licensed administrator. About that time a tremendous compliment was given to the home by the State Inspector: "This home received the highest rate ever given. When I get old I sure hope I can get into this home." With compliments like that he just might make it.

You might think that there wouldn't be much for the new administrator to do under those conditions. Not true. There were always problems to overcome and goals to reach for. One problem that arose was that 2 employees were stealing money from the residents. When a tally was made, it was discovered that the residents had \$2,400 cash in their possession. This money was put in an account for the residents. The employees left, and the problem was solved. There were changes under Mr. Woldt as well. He brought in a psychiatrist every

Wednesday morning at 10:00 a.m. The psychiatrist was there to help the staff help the residents. About this time bookkeeping was expanding because of the acquisitions of the new homes. Mr. Tom Hoewisch was brought in as full time bookkeeper.

But on July 15, 1973 South Lyon saw another change in administrator. The Lord called Mr. Woldt to become the Executive Secretary of Special Ministries for the Wisconsin Synod. However the Lord did not leave South Lyon without a gifted administrator. In fact just the opposite of that. 1973 ushered Pastor Karl Otto into the South Lyon family. Under his guidance<sup>it</sup> continued to grow and serve faithfully.

1974 saw the establishment of a central bookkeeping office in the brick home. That was a rather obvious move after acquiring 2 new homes and all their paper work. 1975 was also a watermark year for regulations. The South Lyon home had to have a "trained food supervisor". What it really meant was that someone had to take more classes or else the kitchen would be closed. Ann Braun filled in commendably at the new position. A "resident bill of rights" was brought into the home, and an infection control committee was established by law. That regulation was time consuming. On a more positive note, 1975 had the first recorded confirmation in the home. The Holt home sailed along on the wings of 3,500 volunteer hours. And Donna Thomas took over in the South Lyon activities department and made some key changes. But the big event for 1975 was the 10 year anniversary of the South Lyon home celebrated on May 4, 1975. The 10 year statistics showed 266 admissions with 180 applicants on file.

A notable event of 1976 was that Pastor Otto was made chief Executive administrator of MLMH and voted in as President of the Michigan Non-profit Homes Association. The key change of 1977 was the retirement of Leona Westendorf. The new head nurse was Jean Chiando. Key personnel were being shifted about, and yet the home managed to maintain its equilibrium. That showed a solid organization was in place. Even though there were potential problems lurking in various areas of the organization. In 1976 Mr. Eberhardt was released as administrator from the Saginaw home. The upper level of the Holt home was condemned, and there was a movement among the Holt home employees to form a union. But the Lord's blessings were not withdrawn. Saginaw was blessed with another gifted administrator. At the Holt home new construction was completed on May 8, 1976 and brought that

home up to code. Also on May 7, 1976 the effort to unionize the workers in the Holt home was defeated 46-12.

1977 - 1981 Years of Solidification

The years of 1977-1981 before the purchase of the South Haven home were relatively quiet years. There was plenty of work to keep every one busy. People in new positions had to settle into their work loads. The newly acquired homes had to be overhauled in specific areas. But still the organization did not stick its head in the sand.

Due to the long list of applicants South Lyon began to look into expansion possibilities. Weekly Bible classes were added at Holt in 1979. Bible classes were added in 1980 at South Lyon. They were held on Wednesday afternoons. I remember we started with I Corinthians and went right into Revelation. Most everybody used the large print King James Bibles. Pastor Otto, Mr. Hoewisch, and Jack Steiner were called upon to help teach classes at M.S.U. The classes were on home for the aged licensing. The overall business and budget of MLMH was expanding rapidly. Copiers and computers were added in 1983. In 1982 MLMH purchased an IBM system 23. Pastor Otto moved up the ladder one more notch and was appointed Executive Director of MLMH on September 17, 1982.

During the years of 1977-1981 maintenance became a priority item in the South Lyon home. Arnie Braun was the key man on the scene. He helped put a P.A. system in around 1977 or 78. That was even while he was still an electronics teacher at South Lyon High School. In 1979 he helped with the intercom system and in 1980 it was the hospital call light system. In 1982 Arnie was hired permanently as the head maintenance man at South Lyon. That's a big job.

But of course true to form MLMH was not satisfied with simply maintaining all their present property and facilities. They had an eye for expansion. And under the Lord's guidance that's just what happened. While volunteers in Saginaw developed a slide presentation of MLMH for congregational use and Holt home under went a 2,200 foot expansion program of its own, the board of control studied overall expansion possibilities. MLMH eventually came up with a plan to purchase Restwood Inn in South Haven, Michigan.

On June 1, 1981 an offer was made to purchase Restwood Inn. The

offer was rejected. However through patient negotiations the Restwood Inn eventually became the 4th home of the MLMH Corporation. The approximate cost was \$2,100,000. Under MLMH the South Haven home served 125 residents in 1982. Pastor William Balza of St. Paul's in South Haven was called to be Chaplain. The dedication of the South Haven home took place at St. Paul's Lutheran School in South Haven on October 11, 1981. Without a doubt the Lord was continuing to bless the endeavors of MLMH.

#### Some Current Activities of the South Lyon Home

Of course the years of solidification from 1977-1981 didn't eliminate all of the problems or challenges. At one point the new South Haven home changed administrators 3 times in one year. The home office in South Lyon had to continue to update equipment and shift personnel. Most noticeably Wilma Hilscher went to Controller after Tom Hoewisch left in 1983. Nevertheless through the spirit of cooperation the workers at MLMH didn't seem to miss a beat. They just did the job where the job needed doing. The good old MLMH spirit didn't fade with the changing of personnel over the years. It just took over new faces and names. The "grass roots" history of MLMH is still to be found in the attitudes and ambitions of the present staff and residents. You'll notice it even if you're not looking for it.

Take a walk with me through the South Lyon home. Just spending some time there is a real joy. You might run into some one like Ann Werner (a past member of the Board) who is presently the head of the Ladies Aid that is so active in the South Lyon home. You might see a rousing game of bingo- complete with practical prizes. You might have a chance to talk with Mrs. Kost about Danzig, Germany or about her two favorite people in the world Chuck Clarey and Pastor Otto. You just might have a chance to browse through an issue of LAMPLIGHTER, the monthly resident publication. It usually has a crossword puzzle, a schedule of events, poetry, or news and notes in it. If you're lucky you might get to hear some one on the Baldwin organ or Rothler and Campbell piano playing an old favorite. You might see residents waiting outside in the hall to get their hair taken care of by Connie Naggy the beautician or getting stamps from Bonnie the secretary. As you stroll through the lounge you might notice the great contrast be-

tween the past and present. The old German books aren't too far from the V.C.R. and the big-screen T.V. (A 1984 gift to the home).

No matter what you hear or see or experience when you visit the South Lyon home you'll be doing it in an atmosphere of love where people really do count. You'll see staff members helping out in whatever way they can- not sweating over the minute details of their job description to see if the work that needs to be done is listed as part of their duties. You might see Jerrold Kamp the new administrator dressed up like Dracula, giving people a needed lift. If you're there in the Spring you might catch the brand new Spring Fling in action. If you come in the summer you might share in the ice cream social or see the ever popular "wheel chair olympics". If you're the relaxing type you might just enjoy sitting in the "smokers lounge" talking.

If you're really living right you might be lucky enough to catch a Lee Donley "politics class" or a reading class or just anything connected with the High School education courses. They were brought in by Donna Thomas in 1977. The classes have gotten rave reviews by both students and teachers. Just ask Sue Lapena who conducted a "personal awareness" class. She was presented with a gold chain (with a gold leaf) as thanks for a job well done. But if you did get to talk with some one in the education department, it wouldn't be long before they would bring up the names of Amanda and August Hamann (most often called "Ma" and "Pa" Hamann.) Those two are the most famous graduates of South Lyon High School.

The Hamann's were married in 1917 and settled down in Iowa to farm the land. They came to South Lyon in 1980 to be near their son. As long as they were here in the home they decided to take advantage of the education classes and expand on their 6th grade education. The rest is history. After taking all the classes offered in the South Lyon home (including art and history under Esther Kerrigan), they found themselves high school graduates at the age of 90. They attended ceremonies at South Lyon High School on June 17, 1984. Pa was quoted as saying, "Better late than never." Ma said, "Where there's a will there's a way."

They're both right of course. And maybe that's what the history of MLMH is all about. MLMH provides a place to be loved and safe and needed. MLMH gives its residents a chance to grow on their own. Here

I have a chance to grow in friendships, to grow in productivity (for example this history of the home I'm working on) but most importantly to grow in my relationship with my Savior. This is home for me.

Well that's it. Those are the basic ideas for my paper. I don't really know how it'll turn out yet. I just wanted to run that much by you. Thanks, Dave, for letting me bend your ear. Take care now until I see you next weekend.

Love always from your dad, Dan

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Concluding Remarks

Obviously there is a lot of history of MLMH that has been left out. There are a lot more people, places, and projects connected with the 4 homes that could be mentioned when writing the history of MLMH. However time and space are limiting factors. It is my hope that by seeing the Lord's hand in the development of MLMH others might be encouraged to venture out with their ideas and see them blessed in the same way.

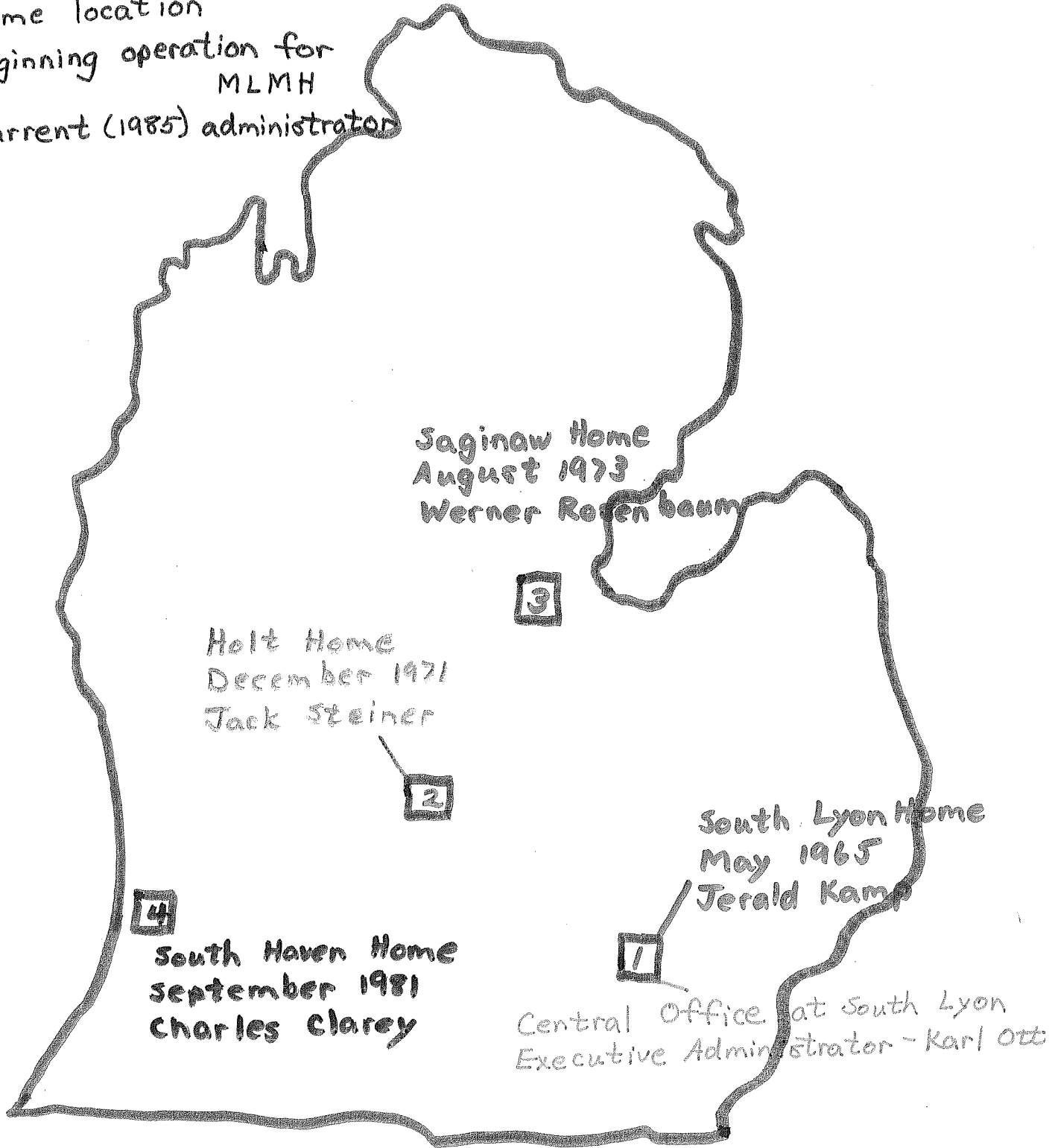
Some people might be tempted to suggest that money, time, and energy poured into projects like MLMH (which are in the Synod but are not of the Synod) are a waste or at best misguided. I would encourage such people to get involved in MLMH and see it work for themselves. The good that has come out of MLMH over the past 25 years cannot begin to be measured. Projects such as MLMH which are not connected with the WELS and its budget deserve the full support of WELS Christians everywhere.

APPENDICES

- A. Home location- Beginning date of operation- current administrator
- B. Administrative outline of MLMH
- C. Administrators and their years in office
- D. Total expenditures of MLMH (1971-1983)
- E. South Lyon Home Expenditures (1965-1980)
- F. Holt home expenditures (1972-1980)
- G. Saginaw home expenditures (1973-1980)
- H. Number of residents in the South Lyon Home (WELS and non-WELS)
- I. Number of residents in the Holt home (WELS and non-WELS)
- J. Number of residents in the Saginaw home (WELS and non-WELS)
- K. Sample food menu for one week at MLMH South Lyon

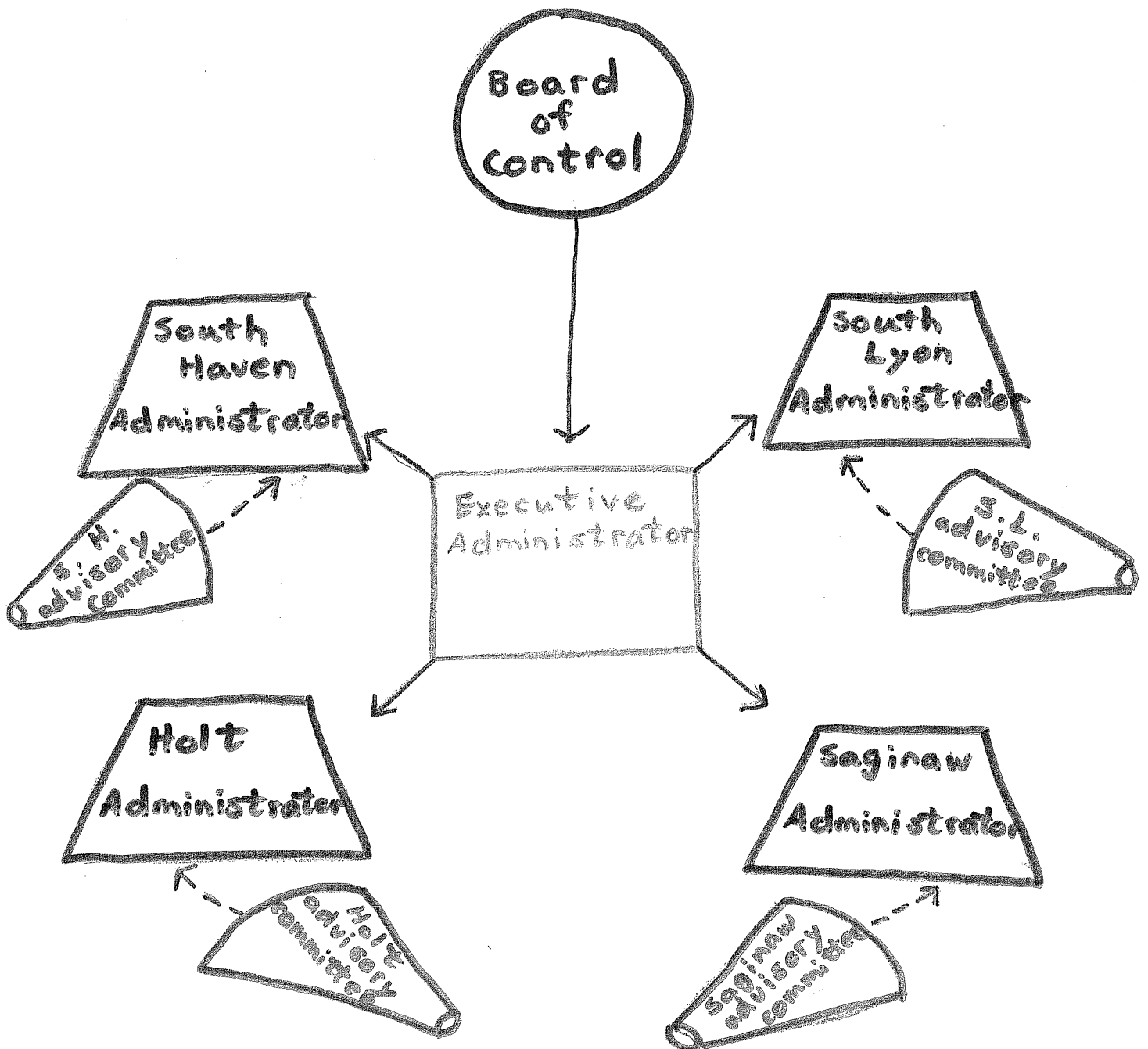
# Martin Luther Memorial Home, Inc.

Home location  
Beginning operation for  
MLMH  
Current (1985) administrator



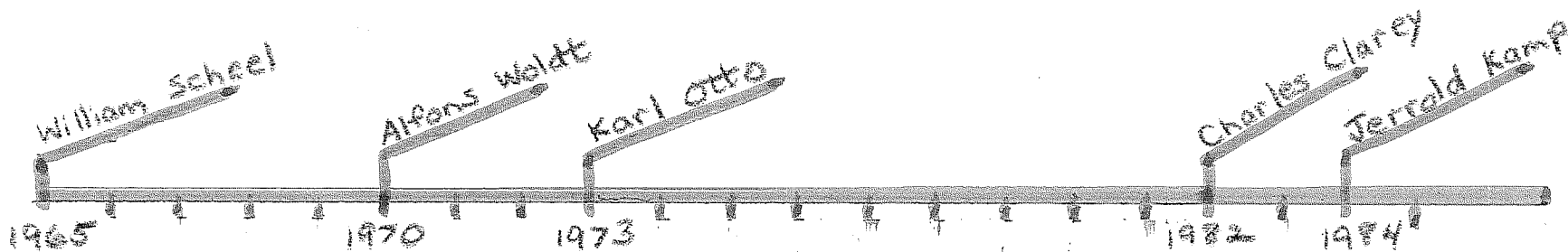


# Administrative Outline of Martin Luther Memorial Home

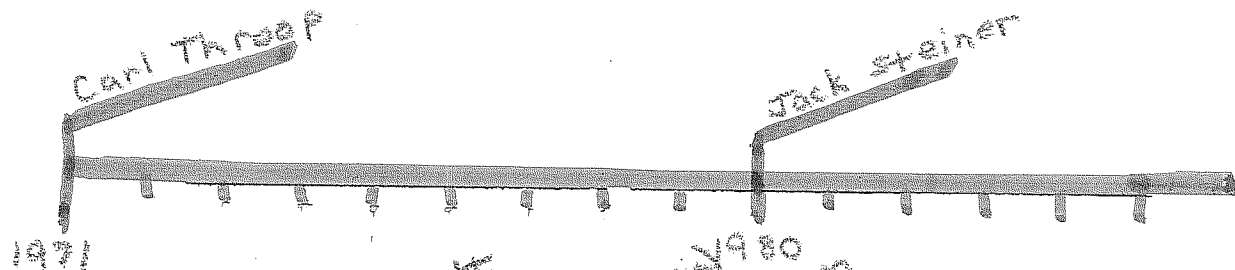


# Administrators and their years in office at MLMH

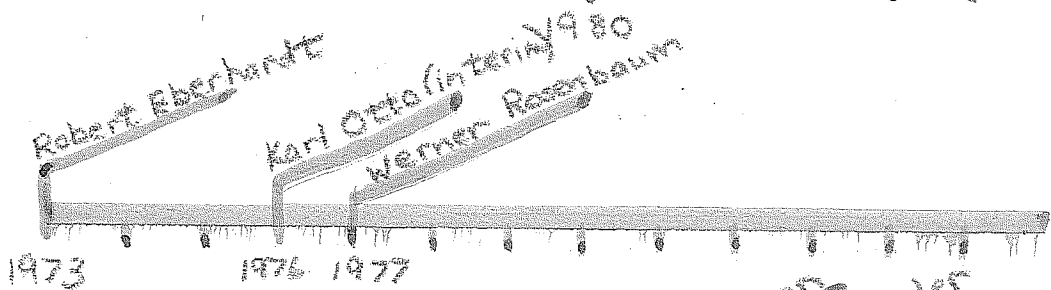
MLMH in South Lyon



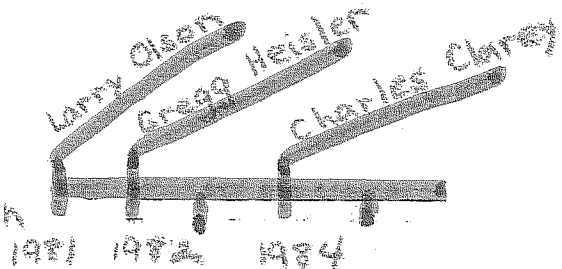
MLMH in Holt



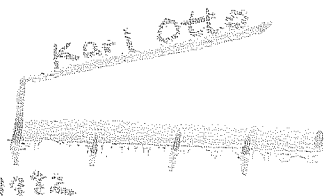
MLMH in Saginaw



MLMH in South Haven

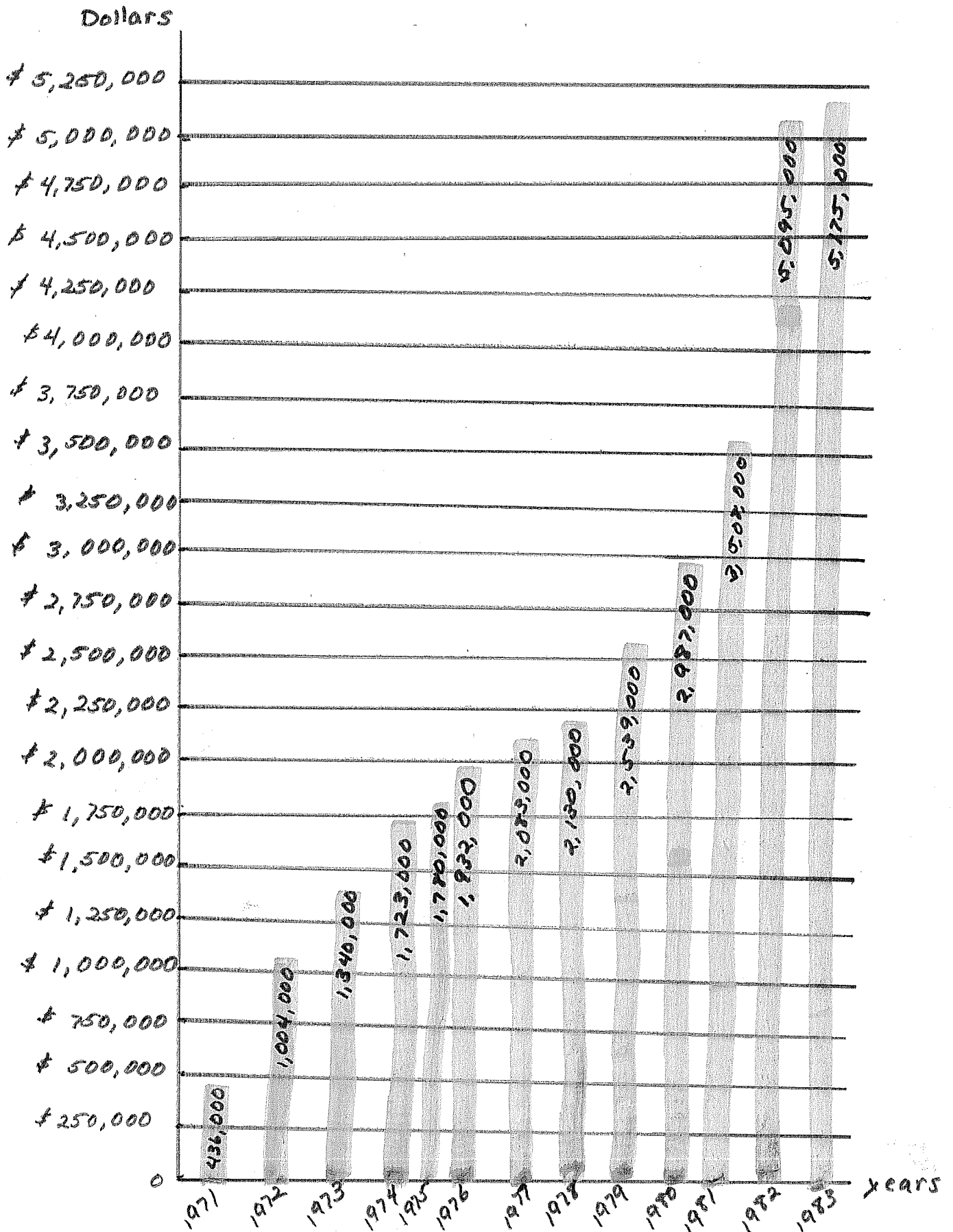


Executive Administrator of MLMH

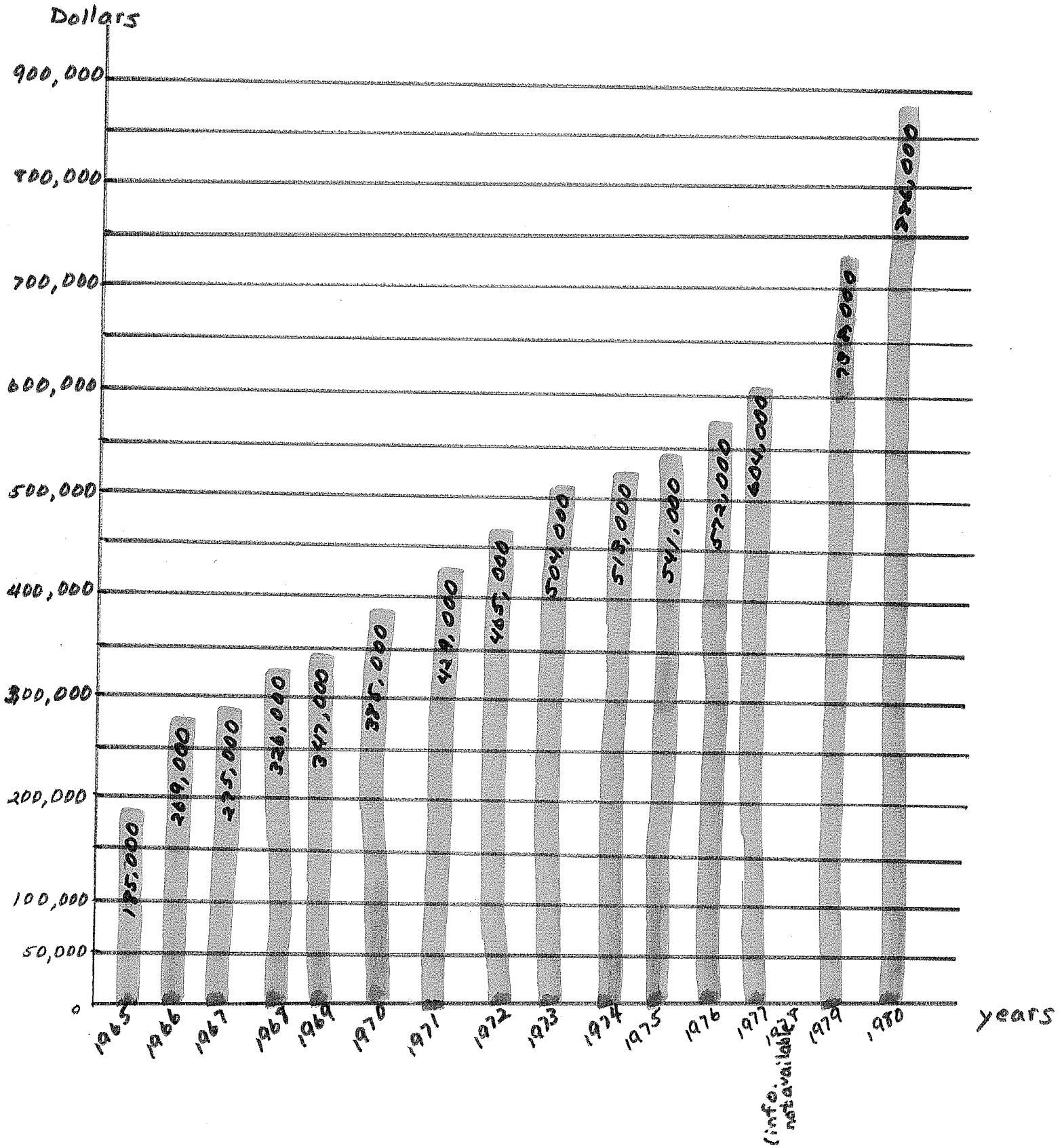


C.

# Total Expenditures of MLMH (1971-1983)

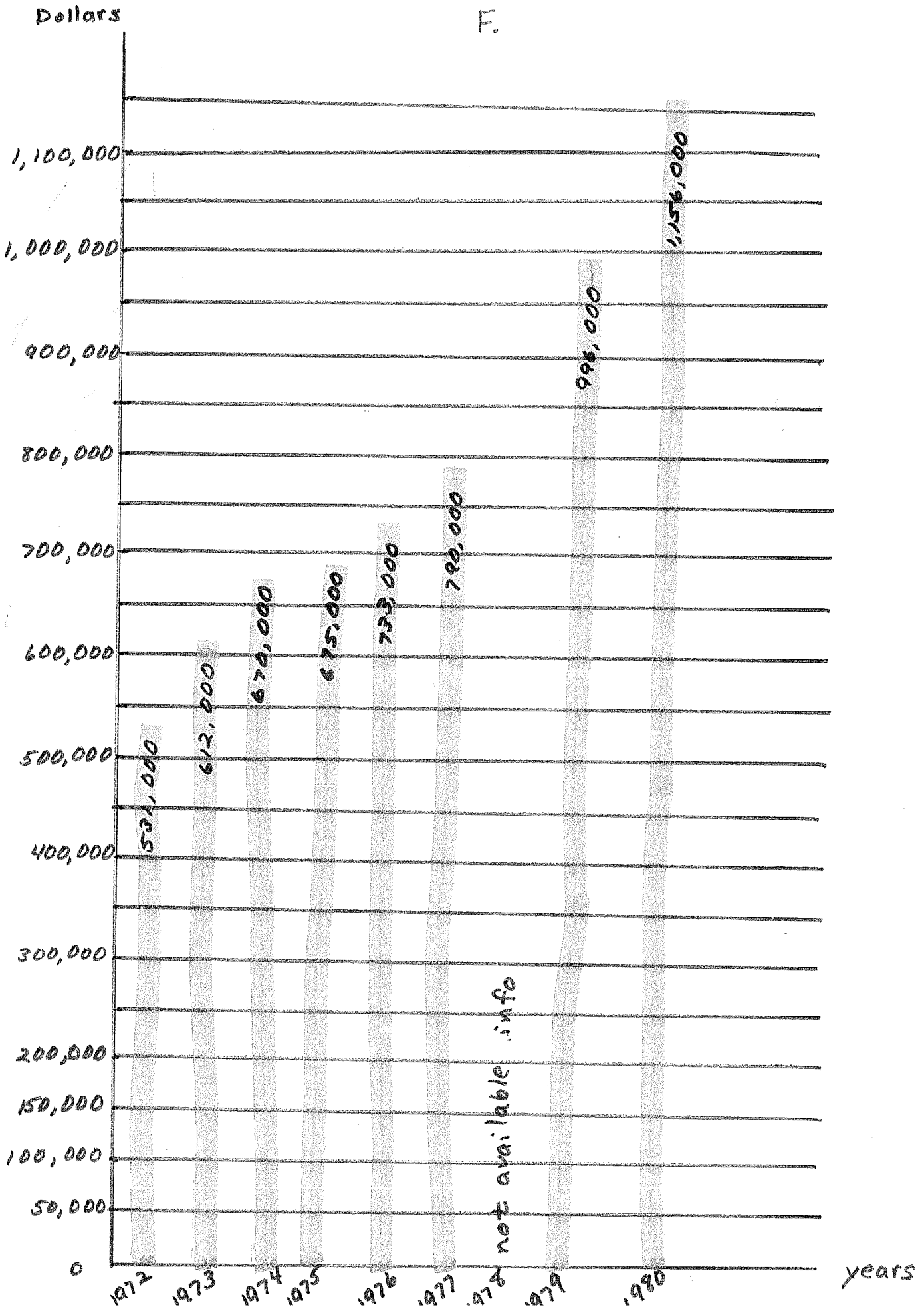


# South Lyon Home Expenditures (1965-1980)

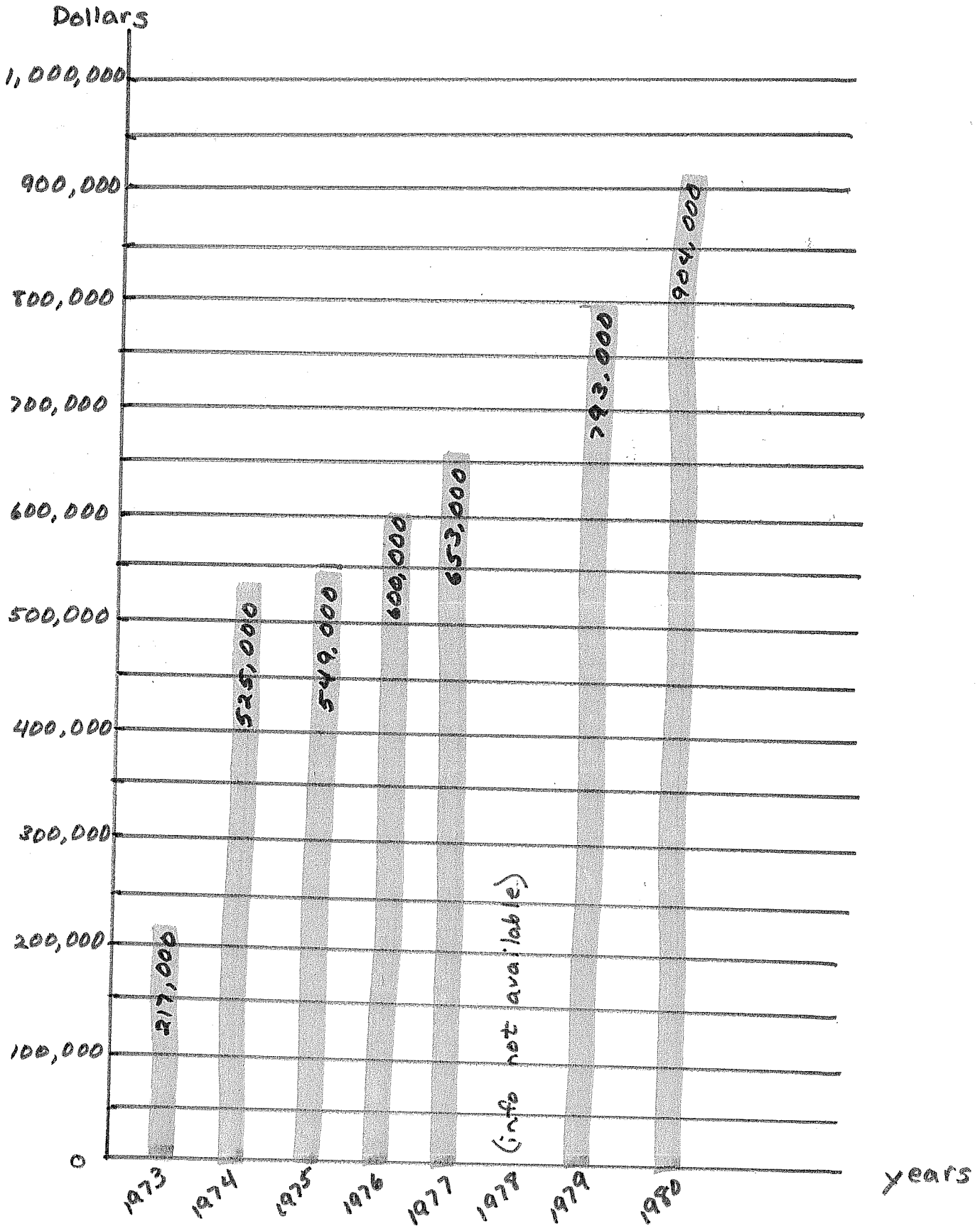


# Holt Home Expenditures (1972-1980)

F.



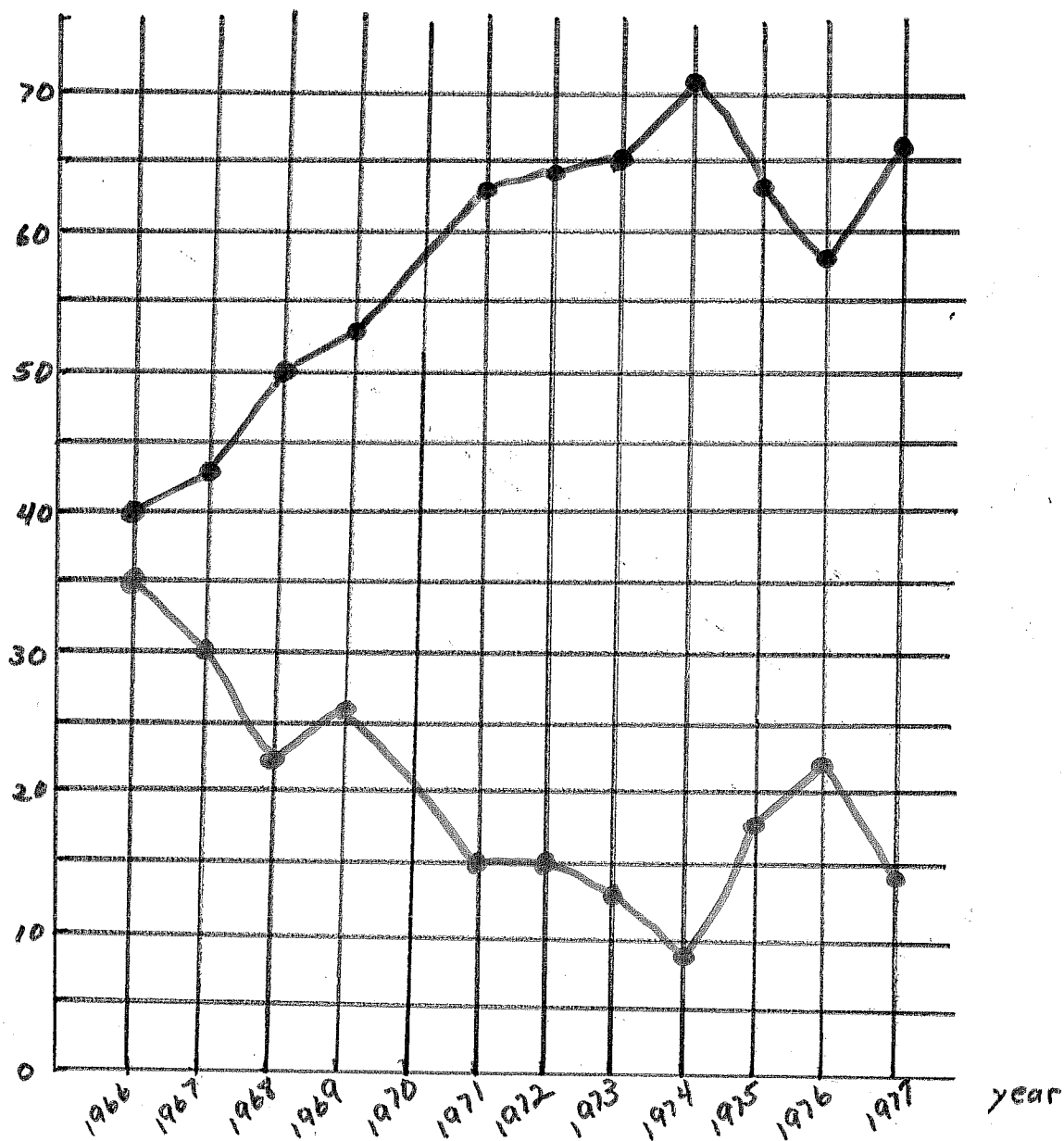
# Saginaw Home Expenditures (1973-1980)



# Number of residents in South Lyon Home

— WELS  
 — non WELS

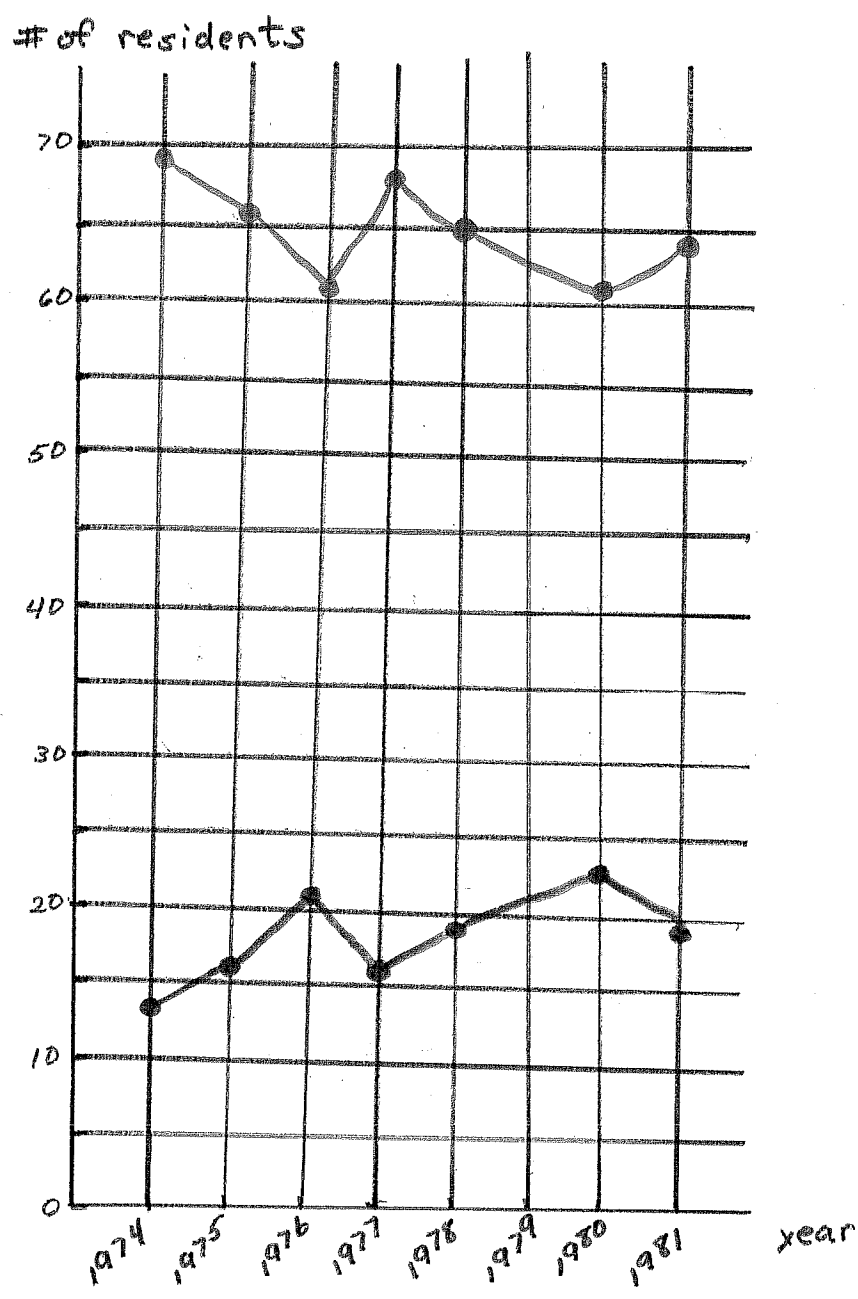
# of residents



	WELS	non WELS
1966	40	35
1967	43	30
1968	50	22
1969	53	26
1970	statistic not available	
1971	63	15
1972	64	15
1973	65	13
1974	71	9
1975	63	17
1976	58	22
1977	66	14

# Number of residents in Holt Home

— WELS  
 — non WELS



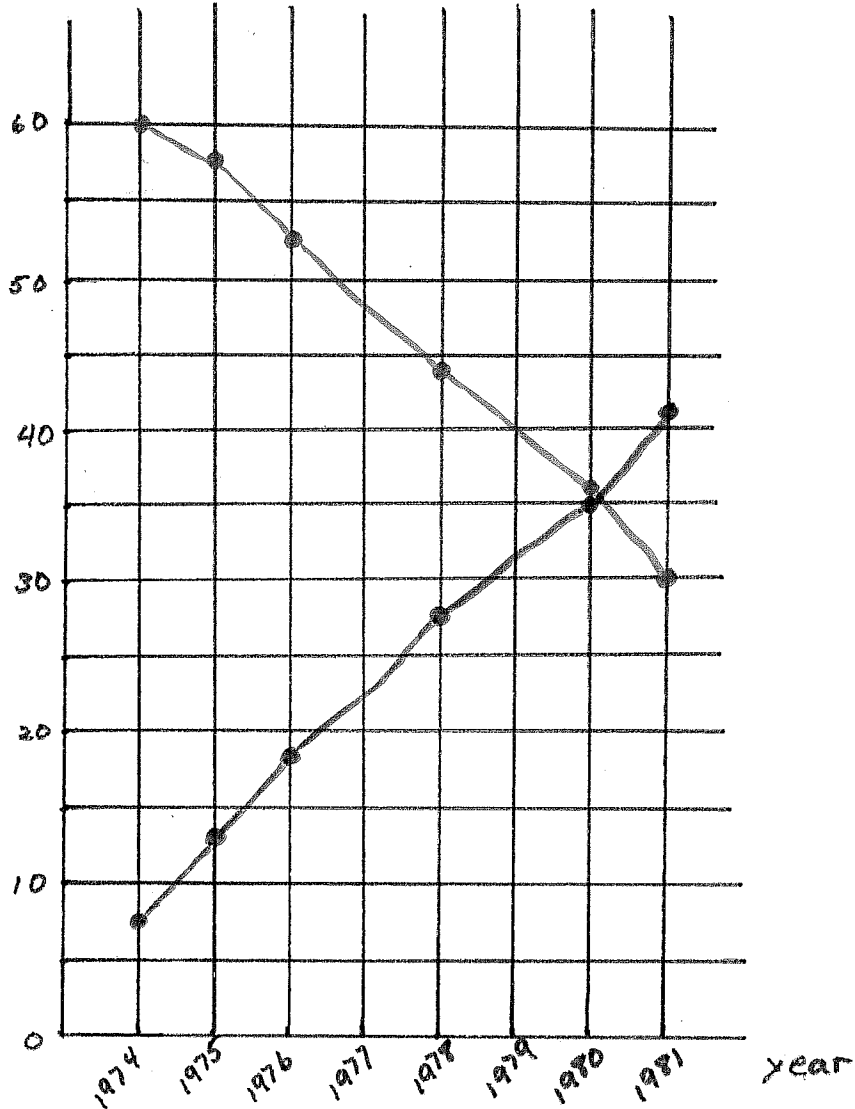
	WELS	non WEL
1974	13	69
1975	16	66
1976	21	61
1977	16	68
1978	19	65
1979	statistics not available	
1980	23	61
1981	19	64



# Number of residents of Saginaw Home

— WELS  
 — non WELS

# of residents



	WELS	non WEL
1974	7	60
1975	13	57
1976	18	52
1977	statistics not available	
1978	27	44
1979	statistics not available	
1980	35	36
1981	41	30

# Sample food menu for one week at MLMH

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00 Break-fast	Cream of wheat Poached egg Toast Orange juice	Oat meal French toast Grapefruit juice	Malt-o-meal Scrambled eggs Teast Apple juice	Maypo Poached egg Toast Tomato juice	Oat meal Sausage Teast Orange juice	Cream of wheat Poached egg Teast Grape Juice	Malt-o-meal Donuts Teast Orange juice
2:00 Dinner	Cube steak Baked potato Cottage cheese Jello	Spaghetti + meatballs Wax beans Tossed salad	Knockvurst Fried potato Stewed tomato Jello	Hamburger steak Mashed potato Squash 5-cup salad	Salmon patties Boiled potato Green beans Cole slaw	Meat pie Fruited jello	Bar-b-q chicken carrots lettuce sal
5:30 Supper	Pea soup Jello cheese + crackers Pears Cookie	Western Sandwich Chips Cucumbers Apricots Cookie	Chick-noodle Casserole Lettuce sal Ice cream	Corn chowder Corn bread Jello Fruit cocktail Cookie	Hot chick sandwich Cottage cheese Plums Cookie	Ham salad sandwich vegetable sticks Pineapple Cookie	Chili Ambrosia salad Custard
7:00 Snack	juice / crackers / fruit / sandwich / sanka						