

“The Winnebago Wonders”

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Church History 331, Section A
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In our Synod’s history, the period from 1950-1961 is primarily remembered as the time when the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod dealt with doctrinal controversies, which ultimately led to the WELS breaking with Missouri. But during this tumultuous decade, our Synod was facing another crisis: a severe teacher shortage in its Lutheran elementary schools. The skyrocketing enrollment in our Lutheran elementary schools caused the WELS to embark on some “heroic” efforts to find new teachers.¹ One such effort took place at Winnebago Lutheran Academy.

Winnebago Lutheran Academy dates its beginning to 1925, when St. Peter’s congregation in Fond du Lac, WI added a ninth grade to its grade school course. One year later, the Winnebago Lutheran Association was formed. The Association’s aim was to develop an academy that would first align the course of training with that of the Synod to prepare young students to enter Dr. Martin Luther College or Northwestern College. Secondly, it planned to offer a general Christian education to those who desired to enter a secular college or the work force.² The whole project was to be regulated and supported independently of synodical supervision. Although not realized at the time, this new educational endeavor would prove to be a tremendous blessing to our Synod as a whole during the teacher shortage crisis of the 1950’s.

The History of the Crisis

The 1940’s were a boom decade for WELS elementary schools. At the 1945 Synod Convention it was reported that “the interest in Christian education in our Synod is growing quite rapidly.” That year alone, eleven new schools opened their doors. This tremendous blessing brought about a very real problem. The number of teacher vacancies that year was fifty-one, with only fifteen graduates from DMLC to fill them. Over the next ten years, WELS elementary school growth was phenomenal:³

	Schools	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	Enrollment
1945-1946	168	188	149	10,937
1955-1956	199	262	357	20,479
Growth	+31	+84	+208	+9542

¹ Edward C. Fredrich, The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans (Milwaukee:Northwestern Publishing House, 1992) 235.

² “Teach Me Thy Way” (Winnebago Lutheran Academy 50th anniversary booklet, 1975) 4.

Throughout the next decade, the teacher shortage worsened. In 1950, there were sixty-six teacher vacancies. The Synod was able to fill them, but had to rely heavily on teachers trained in Missouri Synod schools or public colleges⁴. As the elementary school enrollment increased, so did the teacher shortage. In 1953, all vacancies were filled, but New Um had to send out 40 undergraduate students. It was during this time that DMLC would allow female students to leave after their first, second, or third year to teach in WELS elementary school⁵.

Today, the thought of sending out teachers after only one year, two years, even three years of training is incomprehensible. But in the 1950's, the WELS was following what was being done by the state public schools to alleviate the teacher shortage. In Wisconsin, the University of WI Extensions were used as two-year county teacher colleges. After graduation, students received a special certificate to teach in the area public schools.⁶

During this 50's, various proposals were made to find a permanent solution to the teacher shortage. In 1953, the Educational Survey Committee recommended the establishment Synodical academies at strategic points throughout the Midwest. The first academy was to be located in Milwaukee. They hoped that the parochial schools in the Milwaukee area would become strong feeders for this school. The General Synodical Committee did not act upon this proposal. The WELS was still searching for a solution.⁷

The Educational Survey Committee went back to work. In 1955, it reported its findings and gave the Synod its recommendations for a permanent solution to the teacher shortage (see appendix A). Among its findings:

- E. Conservatively, we estimate that approximately 100 teachers must be available to the Synod annually. (This year it was 124. The ratio between the annual need of teachers would seem to be about three women teachers to one male teacher. At the present time there are 329 women teachers in our schools. Their average years of service to not exceed 2.7)

³ Statistics compiled from the May 29, 1958 minutes of the Board of Education Wisconsin Synod, 4.

⁴ According to the May 19, 1958 minutes of the Board of Education WI Synod: By 1957, 57.5% (640) teachers in the WELS received their degree from non-WELS colleges. The Winnebago Emergency Teachers Program was able to keep this number from rising, but was unable to decrease it.

⁵ Professor Arthur Schulz, Phone Interview, 1 May, 2001.

⁶ E-mail information from the Education and Human Services College- University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. Professor Arthur Schulz also made mention of this program.

⁷ Book of Reports and Memorials, Wisconsin Synod, 1953, p. 76.

- F. Dr. Martin Luther College at top capacity can produce only approximately 40 teachers under the present arrangement. To produce the 100 teachers required, D.M.L.C. would have to have a collegiate enrollment of approximately 500.
- G. Hence it is clear that our present training program cannot cope with this situation. Therefore we have adequate reason to stress the present emergency which calls both for a permanent and a temporary solution.

The Committee's permanent solution was the immediate establishment of a second teacher- training school in Milwaukee. However, the Milwaukee school would not become a reality for another six years. The temporary solution was two -fold. First they would allow sophomore girls who had two years of summer school to teach. Secondly, an emergency teacher training course at WLA would be established:

- A. Pertaining to the Emergency Teacher Training Course at Winnebago
 1. To begin this course with the number of students available.
 2. To open the course to public high school graduates who have proven themselves as potential teaching material.

In August of 1955, the Emergency Teacher Training course at Winnebago Lutheran College officially began. It was hoped that this measure would allow a quick influx of teachers into our schools and temporarily put a stop to the present crisis.

The Winnebago Teacher Training Program

Although, the school did not begin until 1955, the idea for this program came about 8 years earlier. It was then that Professor Winfred Schaller of W.L.A. began to send high school graduates who had the ability, and a desire to teach directly to New Ulm.⁸ After a six week summer course, these students, called "the Six -Week Wonders," were assigned to WELS schools. These teachers filled only a small number of vacancies, but were well received by many churches because they stopped many schools from having to close their doors.

The Synod also recognized the importance of Winnebago as a source for emergency teachers. For example, in 1951 WLA was facing financial difficulties. They asked the Synod to temporarily fund an additional professor. A committee was formed to study this request, and came to the Synod convention with their findings, which were ultimately approved:⁹

⁸ Professor T. W. Zuberier, Personal Interview, 21 April, 2001.

⁹ Recommendations of Committee 9, Proceedings of the 31st Convention of the WI Synod, 1951, p. 89.

Since the Winnebago Lutheran Academy of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin which is preparing and education potential workers for our synod and its churches, cannot maintain a course of study which makes it a feeder-school for our Synod, with the funds which they raise locally, we suggest and recommend to the Conference of Presidents, that Synod supply the necessary funds temporarily, so that the needed professor can be called, whom the Winnebago Board is unable to call at the present time, because of financial difficulties. The expenditure for this one professorship will amount to approximately \$3,000.00 annually.

We make this recommendation for the following reasons:

1. Winnebago Lutheran Academy has been and is a feeder-school for our schools at Watertown, Wisconsin, and New Ulm, Minnesota.
2. Winnebago Lutheran Academy has been and is a source of supply for emergency workers in our schools.
3. Since our Synodical schools are over-crowded and are unable to accommodate all potential students who wish to prepare for the holy ministry and the teaching profession, Winnebago Lutheran Academy is able to give them the course which will enable these students to continue their studies in the College departments of Northwestern and Dr. Martin Luther College.

In 1954, DMLC discussed the idea for a separate one-year college course at WLA. On December 19, 1954, the DMLC Board of Control approved the purchase of the Backer property to be used as a dorm for the proposed program.¹⁰

On June 22, 1955, the DMLC Board of Control sought out to call a professor for WLA. After much discussion Arthur Koester received five votes, Rev. Clayton Krug received one. After much additional discussion, it was resolved that a representation of members of the Winnebago Lutheran Academy Board of Control be invited to attend the next DMLC Board of Control meeting. This meeting was to explore certain mutual problems connected with the calling of a professor for the emergency teacher course. The call was tabled until their next meeting.¹¹

On July 1, 1955, that meeting took place. The two boards adopted the following resolutions:¹²

¹⁰ This house stood on the corner of Park and Merrill Street and was demolished sometime in the 1960s.

¹¹ The minutes of the DMLC Board of Control, June 22, 1955.

¹² The minutes of the DMLC Board of Control, July 1, 1955.

1. That we ask the Winnebago Lutheran Academy Board in our behalf to provide housing space for the students enrolled in the emergency teacher-training course and submit their requests to the Board of Trustees for final approval.
2. That we ask the Winnebago Lutheran Academy Board in our behalf to acquire housing for the professor to be called.
3. That we ask the W.L.A. Board in our behalf to arrange for feeding of the student enrolled in said course.
4. That the W.L.A. Board collect board and room fees and remit to the bursar of Dr. Martin Luther College.
5. Resolved that the Board of Control approves the general outline of the subjects to be taught by the professor elect and leaves the detailed planning to the faculties of the respective schools.

The board then took up calling a professor deferred from the previous meeting. A ballot was taken and this time, Mr. Arthur Koester of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin was the unanimous choice and he was called.

In the fall of 1955, the college classes began at WLA. The school was an extension of Dr. Martin Luther College so it was under the oversight of the DMLC faculty and Board of Control. Professor T. W. Zuberbier served as principal. It is hard to determine who was on the college faculty and who was on the high school faculty.¹³ The two programs were separate, but some of the faculty taught in both programs. The teachers that Synod provided during the operation of the program were Herebert Jaster, Arthur Koester, Bruce Backer, David Lau, Robert Bame, and Harold Maeske.

Officially, in the Dr. Martin Luther College handbook, this course was called the "Emergency Extension Division." The course consisted of one summer session of six weeks at Dr. Martin Luther College, one regular session of two semesters at Winnebago Academy, and a second summer session of six weeks at Dr. Martin Luther College.¹⁴

Curriculum (61 credits):

First Summer Session

Introduction to the New Testament
 Introduction to Education
 School Music
 Organ or Piano Lessons

Second Summer Session

Elementary Dogmatics
 Teaching Religion
 Teaching Language Arts
 Teaching Arithmetic
 Organ or Piano Lessons

¹³ Professor Zuberbier recalled that even though the Synod called teachers to the Academy, that did not mean that they were teachers on the college faculty.

¹⁴ Dr. Martin Luther College Catalog, 1956-1957, p. 37.

Regular Session - First Semester

Introduction to the Old Testament
 Freshman Composition
 Basic Mathematics
 Political Geography- Western Hemisphere
 US History to 1865
 General Sociology
 Biological Science
 Vocal Technique
 Organ or Piano Lessons
 Choir

Regular Session Second Semester

Introduction to the Old Testament
 Freshman Composition
 Basic Mathematics
 Political Geography-Eastern Hemisphere
 US History-1865 to present
 Political Science
 Physical Science
 Vocal Technique
 Organ or Piano Lessons
 Choir

During Easter vacation, students would practice teach in an area grade school.¹⁵ DMLC encouraged the students who graduated from this program to return for summer sessions in order to complete the full course work.

The emergency extension course was only offered to female graduates of the Synodical Conference high schools and to public school graduates who “proved themselves to be potential teaching material”.¹⁶ Not all the students were directly out of high school. There were some “who came as “second-career” students. They came mainly from the Midwest states, but there were a few students who were from states further away.

There were many reasons students enrolled in the emergency extension course and not DMLC proper. For some it was the only way they could afford to go to school. Others saw it as a way they could help alleviate the teacher shortage. Still others came because it was a quick way to become a teacher.¹⁷ Enrollment over the years fluctuated¹⁸:

Year	Graduates
1955-1956	21
1956-1957	22
1957-1958	15
1958-1959	24
1959-1960	Under 20
1960-1961	10

¹⁵ Sylvia Immel, Personal Interview 31 March, 2001.

¹⁶ DMLC Catalog, 1956-1957, p. 37.

¹⁷ Sylvia Immel recounted these as some of the reasons students gave for enrolling in the Winnebago program. Profeseeor Zuberbier also made reference to a few students who came because it was the “easy way out”.

¹⁸ Statistics compiled from the minutes of the Board of Education, Wisconsin Synod, 1955-1958 and the minutes of the DMLC Board of Control, 1959-1960.

Both the high school and college students had classes in the same building. This at times caused friction among some of the staff and the students.¹⁹ The high school seniors especially didn't care for the new arrangement, because now they lost their seniority. All students were required to live in the dorm, which was actually a renovated house. Meals were made in the cafeteria during the week, but on weekends the girls had to cook their own meals. This is the account of life in the dorm²⁰

“We had six in one room which would have been the master bedroom. Six bunk beds were placed in there. We had two dressers and one closet for all 6 of us. We had to press everything before we could wear it. (There) was one little bath off of the room. We put a card table in the middle of the room, had a lamp and extension cord and six folding chairs, and that's where we studied. Or if we wanted to we could go study in the dining room, where we had a lot of interruptions... They made the garage into a room where eight girls slept, and on the porch there were four girls. It got so cold in the wintertime that they wore layers and layers of clothes... We had to go into the basement to shower. Twenty-six girls all coordinated so everyone could get a shower was quite difficult... They were good times... A lot of fond memories.

Following graduation, the students were assigned to various schools in the WELS. They're salary was \$1800 per year, with some making as much as \$2400. This was a “trial by fire” for most of the students. The new teachers headed into classrooms with a very limited teaching experience. According to past teachers and students no one can recount any of these new teachers having to leave because they were not capable to teach. For the most part, churches were happy to have their vacancies filled.²¹

A Quiet End

Five years after its beginning, on October 8th, 1960, the DMLC Board of Control resolved to end the emergency extension course. “The Board of trustees ...suggested discontinuance of this program because of the small number enrolled there (10 instead of the minimum of 20 as

¹⁹ The friction was mild. Professor Zuberbier reported that some on the high school faculty refused to allow the college students to participate in the high school music program.

²⁰ Sylvia Immel, Personal Interview 31 March, 2001

originally established.)” The Board then moved to have a notice placed in Synod papers to the effect that the Winnebago Teacher-Training Program would be discontinued at the end of the 1960-1961 school year, the reason being lack of a large enrollment.

It is true that the enrollment was under 20 for two consecutive years. But there were a few additional factors that led to the program’s termination. In 1955, the Educational Survey Committee proposed an immediate establishment of a teachers college in Milwaukee, and in 1959, the synodical convention authorized its beginning. One year later, in September of 1960, the Lutheran Teachers College-Milwaukee opened its doors. It was during this time that two new women’s dormitories were planned for DMLC.²² The Winnebago extension course essentially, was no longer needed.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Winnebago Teacher’s Training School was to provide an immediate, temporary solution to the teacher shortage crisis facing our synod. Ideally, the church would have liked teachers who went through the three or four year program at Dr. Martin Luther College. But considering the circumstances, the program gave students a solid education in a short amount of time. God used this program, the professors, and close to one hundred graduates, to keep classrooms open, and Lutheran education alive in schools that would have otherwise be forced to close their doors.

²¹ Sylvia Immel recounts that most students were well received. But at her first teaching assignment, the principal snickered at them and thought that they were some fly-by night thing. Professor Schulz does remember some opposition to this program, but it was only small and no official protest can be found.

Appendix A:

**The Report of the Educational Survey Committee to the 33rd WELS Synodical
Convention, Aug 10-17, 1955**

Educational Survey Committee

Your Survey Committee respectfully submits the following report:

I. Preamble

Your committee deems it necessary to state frankly the situation as it pertains to our teacher-shortage problem so that the recommended propositions are considered in their proper perspective.

- A. Our production of teacher has not kept pace with the growth of our schools.
 - 1. Number of schools: 1942- 157; 1955-196; increase 39.
 - 2. Number of classrooms: 1945-337; 1955-577; increase 240
 - 3. Enrollment: 1942-10,238; 1955- 19,632; increase 9,394
 - 4. This growth has been steady throughout all these years.
 - 5. Graduates from New Ulm; 1942-16; 1955-21 (third and fourth-year college).
- B. The interest in Christian education and the promotion thereof has borne fruit, and there is no reason to believe that this will not continue.
- C. The national population trend indicates at least as large an increase in school enrollment in the future as in the past. (School enrollment in 1953: 28,000,000; enrollment anticipated in 1960: 33,500,000.)
- D. With the growth of our synodical institutions of higher learning, the establishment of Lutheran High Schools, and the expansion of many of our elementary schools into Juniors High Schools, we are depleting the ranks of our elementary school teachers.
- E. Conservatively, we estimate that approximately 100 teachers must be available to the Synod annually. (This year it was 124. The ratio between the annual need of teachers would seem to be about three women teachers to one male teacher. At the present time there are 329 women teachers in our schools. Their average years of service to not exceed 2.7)
- F. Dr. Martin Luther College at top capacity can produce only approximately 40 teachers under the present arrangement. To produce the 100 teachers required, D.M.L.C. would have to have a collegiate enrollment of approximately 500.
- G. Hence it is clear that our present training program cannot cope with this situation. Therefore we have adequate reason to stress the present emergency which calls both for a permanent and a temporary solution.

II. Permanent Solution

Such a permanent solution must look to two objectives: the production of a sufficient number of graduates and the establishment of proper "feeder" schools. Therefore we recommend:

- A. The immediate establishment of a second teacher-training school.

²² Edward C. Fredrich, The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1992) 240.

1. Location- Milwaukee. The large potential of students is there. Fewer dormitory facilities are necessary there. The opportunity of drawing students from the Milwaukee Lutheran High School will be greatly improved because it will be under the control of our own churches. Facilities for practice teaching are available there. The proximity of other Lutheran preparatory schools- NWC, Winnebago, Appleton, and Racine- would increase their function as effective "feeders."
 2. Open to women students only.
 3. The curriculum is to correspond with that at DMLC. (Cf. III, B, 1.2.3.)
- B. The establishment of a program for providing proper "feeder" schools.
1. The promised Nebraska District Academy (Cf. Proceedings of 1953, page 85, 3a).
 2. Assistance to private high schools of which the Synod may avail itself as "feeders" for our colleges.
 - a. Only private high schools owned and operated exclusively by Wisconsin Synod congregations or associations eligible for assistance.
 - b. For each graduate from such high schools who enter our colleges the Synod will pay to the high school \$100.00 per year for each year of attendance at such a high school. This money is to be paid to the high school after the student has completed one year of study, provided assurance of continued study for work in the church is given.
 - c. If a high school has a classical course, which furnishes an adequate number of qualified students for Northwestern College, the Synod may further assist such a school.

III. Temporary Solution

As a temporary solution we recommend the following:

- A. Pertaining to the Emergency Teacher Training Course at Winnebago
 1. To begin this course with the number of students available.
 2. To open the course to public high school graduates who have proven themselves as potential teaching material.
- B. Pertaining to a two-year course for girls at D.M.L.C.
 1. That we do not establish a separate two-year teacher-training course for women.
 2. That until the emergency has been met we permit girls of the sophomore college class who have had two years of summer school to teach. (A summer course with some training in methods after the freshman year, opportunity for practice teaching during the sophomore year, and summer course following the sophomore year.)
 3. That the three-year and the four-year courses remain unchanged.

IV. Implementation

- A. In order to effect the above proposals, we recommend that the Synod of 1955 authorize a collection to cover the expenses involved in these proposals.
- B. That the proposed teacher-training college at Milwaukee be given priority in this collection.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE
New Ulm, Minnesota 56073

(Middle) Social Security Number: 398-40-4182
(Last)
Date and Place of Birth: 5/23/40, Oshkosh, WI
Matriculated: 6/16/58 Total Credits: 68.5
Withdrawn: SS-1960 Total Grade Points: 121.5
Graduated: Average Grade Point: 1.773
Degree: Final Rank: 1.773

Name of Student: (First) (Last)
Address: A.C.T. Level III
Total High School Credits:
College Credits Accepted:

PERMANENT RECORD CARD

Elementary School:

High School:

Other Colleges:

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
SUMMER SESSION 1958			
Rel	211 Int to New Test	B	3
Edu	212 Int to Teach	C	3
Edu	341 School Music	B-	1½
Mus	Piano	C-	7½
Total			13½

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
SUMMER SESSION 1959			
Rel	352 Elem Dogmatics	C	3
Edu	352 Teach Arith	C-	1½
Edu	362 Teach Lang Arts	C+	1½
Edu	306 Teach Religion	B-	1½
Mus	Piano	B-	-
Total			7½

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
In accordance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, you are hereby notified that this information is provided upon the condition that you, your agents, or employees will not permit any other party to have access to such information, in personally identifiable form, without first obtaining written consent of student(s).			

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
Sem I 1958-59			
Rel	111 Int to Old Test	A	3
Eng	111 Freshmen Comp	B-	3
Mth	151 Basic Math	C+	3
Sci	221 Surv Biol Sci	B-	3
Geo	151 Wild Pol Geog	B+	3
SSt	171 Gen Sociology	B+	3
SSt	342 U S Hist -1865	B+	3
Mus	111 Vocal Tech	B	1
Mus	Piano	B	1
Total			23

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
SUMMER SESSION 1960			
Rel	214 Life of Christ	B+	3
Edu	301 Teach Soc Studies	C+	3
Mus	Piano	B	-
PEd	First Aid	A-	1½
MICROFILMED BY 71989			7½
Total			7½

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
Total			

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
Sem II 1958-59			
Rel	112 Int to Old Test	A+	3
Eng	112 Freshmen Comp	C+	3
Mth	152 Basic Math	C+	3
Sci	112 Surv Phys Sci	B-	3
Geo	152 World Pol Geo	B+	3
SSt	441 U S Hist 1865-	B	3
SSt	482 Pol Science	B-	3
Mus	112 Vocal Tech	C+	1
Mus	Piano	C+	1
Total			23

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
Total			

SEMESTER AND YEAR	Course Description	Grade	Credit
VALID ONLY WHEN SEAL IS EMBOSSED OVER SIGNATURE. <i>Glenn R. Barnes</i> Glenn R. Barnes, Registrar April 7, 1989 ACCREDITED BY NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS			
Total			Total

Credit is indicated by semester hours.

Grade Point Code:

A = 4 grade points per credit; B = 3 grade points per credit;
C = 2 grade points per credit; D = 1 grade point per credit;
F = no credit, no grade point.

Grade Code: A = 93-100; B = 85-92; C = 77-84; D = 70
F = below 70; failure; I = incomplete; WP = with-
passing; WF = withdrew failing; S = satisf

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