

**HOW MLA IN NEW ULM, MINNESOTA
BECAME MLPS IN
PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WISCONSIN**

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It isn't often that an entire high school, consisting of over 200 students and 14 faculty members and their families, is moved. But that is exactly what happened during the summer of 1979 when Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm, Minnesota moved and became Martin Luther Preparatory School in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. When one hears of such a move as this, questions immediately come to mind. The most obvious being, "Why was the move necessary?" Other questions might be, "Why move all the way to Prairie du Chien?" and "How was this move carried out?"

These questions particularly intrigued me because I was a member of the last class to graduate from Martin Luther Academy in the spring of 1979. We knew that the next year we would no longer have an alma mater on that campus. Our high school was closing its doors and would open them again 235 miles away in the town of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. As a student, I can remember being somewhat perplexed as to how this all came about. From a student's standpoint, I could obviously see that the campus was overcrowded and that there were many problems because of it. The next thing I remember was that there was a special Synod convention and it was decided that the high school would be moved just like that, or so it seemed. Little did I, or many of us, realize what had all gone on behind the scenes. This had been no spur of the moment action, but it had involved years of detailed studies and many hard decisions. In this paper, we will go behind the

scenes to answer the question, "HOW DID MLA BECOME MLPS?"

To understand how this all came about, it would be beneficial to look at a little bit of MLA's history. The school's history goes back to 1884 when Dr. Martin Luther College, which included the high school department, was founded in New Ulm by the German Synod of Minnesota. In 1892, the Minnesota Synod combined with the Wisconsin Synod and the Michigan Synod to become what is now known as the Wisconsin Synod. For a great many of the school's early years, it was known as Dr. Martin Luther High School. In 1962, the Synod decided to separate the college and the high school department. In the following years, changes were made to accomplish this goal and in 1967 the name of the high school was officially changed to Martin Luther Academy. (Catalog, p.8) The history of this school took a dramatic turn, however, when it was decided in a special Synod convention in 1978 that MLA should move to Prairie du Chien. What were the events that led up to this decision?

We can go back over three decades to see where the problems first showed up. Already in the middle of the 1950's, problems developed on the campus because there was a lack of room to house all the students in the high school and college departments. The phrase "lack of room" would become the reoccurring theme throughout the next twenty years. We see this message starting already in the 1958 Report to the Ten Districts where the board of control stated, "We cannot continue to operate for long with the present enrollment

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without making major adjustments in our plant. It is imperative that we obtain adequate facilities." Again in the 1959 Proceedings the comment is made, "Our present need can be stated in two words-More Room. We will be unable to accommodate all who enroll."

During these years, when the enrollment was steadily increasing, numerous building projects were taken up to try to keep up with the needs that additional students brought. To this end, Old Main was expanded and a dorm for the women, Centennial Hall, was added in the late forties. In the early sixties, another women's dorm was added to the campus. The tiny Music Hall was replaced as the main music building by the new Music Center which was dedicated in 1962. (Schroeder, p.123) Still, with all this expansion, problems continued. By the time something was done to alleviate the problem, increasing numbers were expected. As Prof. Schroeder put it, "It seemed that every improvement was a step or two behind reality. Dr. Martin Luther College and the Wisconsin Synod could not catch up." (Schroeder p.115) To give a short term remedy to the problem of housing, a certain number of students lived off-campus in private homes. These numbers fluctuated but usually increased as the enrollment grew. The Synod Proceedings from 1961 indicate that some applications for the ninth grade would have to be withheld because of the housing shortage. (1961 Proceedings, p.70)

To settle some of the problems caused by the limited space on the campus, the special synod convention of 1962 gave

firm directives to resolve the matter. It was decided to separate the synod preparatory schools from the synod colleges so that our worker training system might operate more effectively. (1962 Proceedings, p.28) Along with this decision, the directive was given for the purchase of land for a new high-school campus. This land was to be "preferably on a favorable site that is now available in the city of New Ulm and in the proximity of DMLC." (p.42) In keeping with this resolve, it was also decided at this same convention that, "...the Board of Control of Dr. Martin Luther College be authorized to develop a plan, secure a site, and obtain firm bids for presentation at our next regular convention." (p.58)

As a result of the actions taken at this convention, a separate board was established for the newly separated Dr. Martin Luther High School. This board called Pastor Oscar Siegler to be the first administrator in 1963. (Schroeder, p.156) Within a short amount of time, over 105 acres of land was also purchased for the school. This land, located on the edge of the city of New Ulm became known as Campus #2. (Schulz) In 1964, the High School's board indicated that separate operational budgets for the prep and college department had been set up and by the 1966-67 school year, faculties of the two departments were virtually two distinct entities. (Schroeder, p.157) The board also stated, "We eagerly look forward to the day when the Synod will be financially able to construct the buildings necessary for the complete separation of both departments on separate campuses."

(p.157)

The need to start building on this land was great. The Proceedings from 1965 show that the Board for Martin Luther High School was urged to start the first phase of building with bare essentials at an estimated cost of \$1,952,000. The following year, the same message was repeated, "We feel that there is an urgent need to proceed with plans for some building on the newly acquired campus." (Report to the Nine Districts,1966) Yet, for a variety of reasons, the greatest of which was financial, the phased building program never really got off the ground. The extent of the building program on this property consisted of some new homes for faculty members and an athletic field where the Academy held its baseball games. (Schulz)

Because the phased building program never really got started, problems continued to mount on the main campus. During the next several years, the Synod's Proceedings make little reference to the newly acquired campus land. What is mentioned, is the fact that something needed to be done to get around the housing problem. At the Synod's 40th convention, a motion was made to limit the Academy's enrollment to 175. This motion failed because DMLC's future enrollment could not be accurately projected and because other short term options were available. (1969 Proceedings, p.114) To this end, college students, usually the junior and senior men, were housed off campus to try to alleviate the problem. It was a yearly concern to secure more housing for the additional amount of

people that had to live away from the campus. During these years, male students were often living three to a room in Summit Hall when these rooms were only intended for two. Male students also lived in West Hall, an antiquated building that was designed as a temporary structure some two to three decades earlier. These actions did little to solve the real problems at hand, however. After ten years (1965-74) of relative quiet concerning the matter, many of these difficulties again came to the foreground in the mid-seventies.

It was the college department that initiated the discussion with the Academy at this time. The President of DMLC at that time, Conrad Frey, reports in his "*Response to the Preliminary Report on the Future of MLA*" the following, "I have suggested several times to President Oscar Siegler of MLA that it is time for the Academy to update its study regarding the future...and that an in-depth study with recommendations be brought to the Commission on Higher Education and to the Synod." (Response, p.2) In response to this report, Pres. Siegler asked Dean James Schneider and Prof. Hahnke of MLA to begin work on the subject. These men then worked closely with the college department considering the possible directions that might be taken. (Schneider) During the next two to three years, a variety of studies and reports were done by both the prep and college departments. Pres. Frey especially included detailed accounts of what was happening in this area along with his reports to the college Board of Control. In 1977, he

also wrote a long report entitled, "*Impact of Increasing Enrollments on Dr. Martin Luther College from the Point of View of a Shared Campus.*" In all these reports, there were a number of key points brought out which indicated the necessity of moving MLA away from the college.

The main problem was that the campus was just too crowded. The campus housing itself could hold a total enrollment of 780 students, but for many years running the number had far exceeded the limit. By 1978 the college had an enrollment of 762 and MLA had 272 for a combined total of 1034. (Schulz) The college department at this point could only see a steady rise in their enrollment with nowhere to turn. With the housing shortage, "it was virtually impossible for the college to do any adequate longer-range planning." (Frey, 1975) To their credit, DMLC provided for these studies tedious charts which depicted their expected growth at many different levels. In this regard, they also showed with these expected figures the correlating number of people that would have to be housed off campus to meet this influx.

On top of this, both departments were also concerned about the condition of the housing that was available on the present campus. The Annex, which housed a dozen college men, was in bad shape and the advisability of maintenance was always a concern. (Frey, p.3 1975) (This building was torn down early in 1982) As was mentioned earlier, West Hall was also in terrible shape. Not only were conditions quite poor for the two students who had to share one of its tiny rooms

(as I did in my first year on campus 75-76) but this building was a concern for the fire marshal who continually threatened to close the place. (Impact, p.3) If these buildings were to be closed, even more people would have to be sent off campus.

The off-campus situation was growing increasingly worse. The number of people sent off campus increased yearly during the seventies. By 1977 the college found it necessary to house 120 students off campus. A number of problems arose because of this. The first problem dealt with the fact that most of the male college sophomores were placed off campus. These younger men, as compared to the junior and seniors, often lacked the maturity of their upperclassmen. A result of this were increasing problems with drinking and late hours. It was felt that these men could be better supervised on campus. (Impact, p.2) Just securing off-campus housing was in itself a major dilemma that was faced on an annual basis. Although most of this housing was for men, limited space was necessary for over twenty women also. (Frey, 76) Along with securing the off-campus housing came the additional problem of paying for it. During these years, the cost of utilities increased dramatically which naturally resulted in increased payments to the home owners per student. By 1977, the cost per student living off campus was \$35 and that figure could only grow. The final problem in this area for the college department was the simple fact that the majority of the students did not want to be housed off campus. They preferred to be nearer the facilities; library, cafeteria, classrooms, and often had to

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be persuaded to move into residential homes. Needless to say, many parents of the students were also concerned about their child's housing situation. (Impact, p.2)

Because of these difficulties, DMLC recommended to MLA that it curtail its enrollment. (1978 Proceedings) To do so would have been a blow to the Academy. To circumvent this, rooms capable of holding three to four students were added in the basement section of Summit Hall. During the 77-78 and 78-79 school years, MLA also housed 10 of its male students off campus in a professor's former house on the edge of Campus #2. Being one of the residents in this house during the 78-79 year, I can verify some of Pres. Frey's comments from above. As exciting as it was for us to be away from the campus, it was probably not the healthiest of situations with the limited supervision that was available. From DMLC's perspective, the housing situation could best be solved if MLA could move and start an existence on its own. This would open up 206 spaces for the college department that it sorely needed. (Impact, p.3) For MLA to build additional housing on the main campus would not resolve the main problems. This view was expressed quite clearly, "It should be stated that the college board of control is unalterably opposed to the construction of any new buildings on its campus designed solely to serve the needs of the academy since any such construction would commit this campus to a dual function for years to come and would not resolve the basic problems." (Response, p.8)

Another major problem was the difficulty surrounding the

use of the gymnasium. Dean Schneider summed up the situation best when he described the scheduling problem that existed for the gym as being "a nightmare". Scheduling had to work around male college varsity and junior varsity games as well as women's varsity and junior varsity games. Add on to this the Academy's games which also included varsity, junior varsity and in some cases 9th grade basketball for the boys and girls and one can see how difficult it was to run an interscholastic schedule. (Schneider) Detailed charts were posted indicating the amount of court time each team could have to practice. Sometimes teams were limited to only use of a half court for one hour. College and Academy wrestling also had to be taken into account for use of the facilities. Top all this off with a full intramural program in both departments for the men and women and one wonders how anything was accomplished. The years I was on campus, I can recall college intramural programs being conducted sometimes until 11:30pm. The task was monumental considering the attendance on campus was +1000 students. With all this activity, it was rare for other clubs such as the college pom-pom and color guard squad to know if it would have any time to practice on the main floor. One must also keep in mind that there were physical education classes that needed to be scheduled for all of these people also.

The whole situation of crowding in the gym had several impacts. First of all, it obviously led to a lack of flexibility and sharply reduced the number of open dates for scheduling college interscholastic activities. Intramural

activities also had to be curtailed for lack of time. This lack of time for practice undoubtedly hampered all of the teams that were involved. No one ever had enough time on the court. The problem ran over into the locker rooms where there also was limited space available. Storage areas were at a minimum and locker facilities were shared by both departments. (Response, p.5) All this led to hard feelings held by many that were involved. Athletes often blamed the athletes from the other teams for the limited time for practice. This was especially the case between the college and the prep departments.

Another area where one might also describe another scheduling nightmare had to do with the music department. Practice in the two buildings for piano and organ went on a daily basis from 7:15 am to 11 pm. Altogether, there were 760 students involved in instrumental music lessons. This required 3800 practice periods per week. (p.5) Again, it can be taken for granted that scheduling all this was a problem. Hard feelings also arose because the Academy was given "preferential" scheduling time so that the student's evening study period would not be affected. This created a situation where the college students were often forced into less desirable hours of practice. (p.5) This all was just a small part of the morale problem that was felt on campus during these years.

Being a student during these last crowded years of a shared campus, I can distinctly remember that there were hard

feelings between the students of the college department and the prep department. This all led to undesirable tension between the two student bodies. There were many different reasons for this morale problem. "The major cause for tensions on campus between the students of the college and the academy lies in the joint use of the student union." (p. 6) In analyzing why this was the case, Pres. Frey hit upon some key factors when he stated that the key problem was the great diversity of ages and the differences between 13-17 year olds and 18-22 year olds. "The very nature of the lower age group is to be loud and to be involved in horse-play which the older group tends to interpret as rowdyism." (p.6) These feelings were often best typified in the game room and T.V. room or in the main lobby after a sporting event. Often the Academy students were boisterous and even obnoxious and often college students gave little effort to understand the nature of high school students. Frey commented, "It is a complex situation, fraught with tensions and some strife, which produces a very unhealthy atmosphere for both the academy and college students." (p.6)

Attempts that were made to clear up the situation met varying degrees of success. Separate T.V. rooms were made and student union monitors were established. Still, tensions resurfaced again and again. This was especially the case between the upper two classes of the Academy and the lower two classes of the college. Frey added another helpful insight into this situation when he stated, "Perhaps with the former

group it is a lack of identity and with the latter an inability to be understanding." (p.6) One could also say that there also were areas of student behavior or discipline that became problems because of the crowded conditions. It was easy for a high school student to get "lost in the crowd" among so many people, especially on big activity weekends such as plays and banquets. This lack of direct supervision easily led to drinking, smoking and dating problems. Rules concerning automobile use were also hard to enforce with the amount of traffic that naturally occurred on campus. Unfortunately, there were always new college students that too easily lent out their cars or obtained alcohol for some students.

Other areas were also involved to a lesser extent. The Library and the cafeteria had their own unique elements to be worked out but nothing of major consequence. The Academic building had enough room for all the students, but again there were scheduling problems. The High School department had to wait until the college had all of its classes scheduled before it could start to schedule its own classes. This often left the Academy with only two or three days to complete this work before school opened. (Schneider) When all these elements are added up, we can see why there was a dire need for a major change in the situation. As Frey summed it up, "The implications...(of above reasons) confront the academy and the college, to say nothing of the Synod, with the need to make some very thorough studies and, very soon, some very hard-nosed decisions." (Response, p.7)

Indeed, some very big questions needed to be decided. The issue wasn't the worthiness of the preparatory department. That had been firmly established in past conventions. The issue was what would be best for the College and the Academy in the long run. To help decide what courses of action might be taken the 1977 Synod convention resolved, "That the Commission on Higher Education give high priority to relieving the overcrowded conditions at Dr. Martin Luther College and Martin Luther Academy in its overall plans." (Resolution No.16, 1977 Proceedings, p.69) The CHE was also given some clear directives that they were to follow in completing this study. The 1977 convention also asked them to gather data on 1) other academies in other religious bodies; 2) estimated construction costs for new facilities; 3) the availability and feasibility of purchasing an already existing school, or other suitable facility; 4) where the prep school might best be located based on the the concentration of the synod's population; 5) the positive and negative aspects of having prep schools close to the college; 6) the impact of the area high schools; and 7) the method of financing these recommendations. (p.68)

As one can see, the CHE had a major assignment on its hands. When reviewing the 1978 Report to the Ten Districts, one has to be impressed by the thoroughness with which this group carried out their task. Synod President Oscar J. Naumann, echoed this praise, "I cannot recall from my more than 40 years in the active ministry and 30 years in synodical

administration that any questions have ever been given the exhaustive and exhausting study and investigation that these questions received." (1978 Report to the Ten Districts, p.2) The only aspect of the assignment that wasn't carried out in detail by this time was the task of analyzing the prep schools of other church bodies. However, this work was completed and made available to the Synod within a very short period of time after this report.

To gather data for their report, the CHE sent letters to 13 different cities between Watertown, Wisconsin and New Ulm, Minnesota. These letters dealt mainly with questions about land and construction costs, whether or not any sites were readily available, and what the community reaction might be to such a move. The response to these letters served as the basis for the Commission's estimated costs of new construction and land purchases. It was also through this survey that a couple of sites were suggested for consideration. These sites were the former Bethel College in St. Paul, Mn. and a hospital in Wausau, Wisconsin. The best results occurred when contacts were made through the Roman Church as to the availability of existing sites in the Midwest. Through this contact, sites in Edgerton, Green Bay, and Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin were suggested. (p.15,16)

In preparing this report, the CHE also asked both departments at New Ulm to present the positive and negative aspects of having the high school in close proximity of the college. The college report conceded that there "may" be a few

advantages to having the two schools close, such as some sharing of facilities and the convenience for parents in transporting children to both schools. But the clear feeling presented by the college was that a total break should be made. "We believe the disadvantages of maintaining a preparatory school and a college on the same campus far outweigh any advantages that may accrue." (p.18) Further clarification of this statement also pointed to the fact that even being in the same city would have more disadvantages than advantages.

In contrast to the college report, the Academy made it quite clear that it felt it should definitely stay in the proximity of the college for a number of reasons. Main reasons included the availability of land already in New Ulm (Campus #2), being able to use college personnel and resources, and the excellent opportunities this proximity would lead to in the recruitment of students for the college. Other points included being able to participate in college activities and the enduring image the high school had for the Synod's constituents. (p.20) The direction the Academy felt necessary was obvious, to begin a phased building project on Campus #2. This was all in keeping with the directive the Synod had given for the high school in the 1962 convention. "MLA had one directive from the Synod, to plan for a new campus in New Ulm. It moved in this direction until such a time that the Synod gave it a new directive, namely to change direction." (Schulz)

It was clear from this report that the CHE had given a

lot of time and attention to one of the options that had been made known to it through the Roman Church which would involve a new change of direction for the Academy. This option was the availability of the Campion Campus at Prairie du Chien. The Commission was able to make its first visit to this campus on October 28th, 1978 and they were duly impressed by the opportunity that was placed before them. (1978 Report to the Ten Districts, p.33) The 108.2 acre campus in Prairie du Chien was almost centrally located, being 235 miles southeast of New Ulm and 178 miles west of Milwaukee.

When one looks at the facilities that were included on this large campus, we can see very easily why the CHE was impressed with this site. There were nine buildings on this campus which gave it an estimated student capacity of over 500 students. (p.36) These facilities included an administration - classroom building,, a kitchen and dining hall, and three dormitories. The campus also had two gymnasium buildings, the one containing a swimming pool. Among the buildings was a large chapel which could seat up to 600 people. Most of these buildings were in good shape as typified the quality of buildings the Roman Catholics construct. The CHE found, "All of the buildings on campus, except for the oldest, have been erected to provide minimal maintenance problems. There is block and brick construction with much use of ceramic tile, marble window sills, metal window framing, terrazzo and tile flooring." (p.36) As Pastor Schulz put it, "These buildings are some of the best we have in Synod. The Catholics build

differently than we do. They tend to build fortresses." Included with the campus were tennis and outdoor handball courts, various athletic fields for softball, baseball, and football, and even a "rustic" golf course. All this was available to the synod at a total initial cost of \$2,800,000. A payment of earnest money was made in the amount of \$25,000 to hold the facility until a decision could be made. (p.36)

One wonders, when hearing about this, just why Campion Campus was available at this time. Pres. Frey recalled that Campion had been one of the very excellent prep schools in the Jesuit system with an outstanding academic reputation and a no-nonsense approach to discipline. As a result, Campion attracted students of well-to-do parents, particularly from the Midwest and Chicago area. However, in the 60's, when the availability of teaching Jesuits diminished, the faculty became increasingly diluted with lay teachers who negatively affected academic standards and discipline and contributed substantially to increased operating costs. To offset these costs, the administration began looking to federal sources of funds by reducing admission standards and admitting inner city students with records of low academic achievement. This further reduced academic quality and standards of discipline. Parents of means became increasingly disenchanted with these developments and this one-time source of promising students dried up. Racial problems between the students and incidents between Campion students and local students also occurred. When the enrollment dwindled down to 300, the Jesuits decided

it was time to close the school in 1975 in spite of the excellent facilities. (Frey)

However, as great as it all sounded, all was not perfect with the Prairie du Chien campus and the location in general. The CHE recognized that there would be some problems that would have to be dealt with. Something had to be done with the oldest building on campus, the library-classroom building. For it to be used permanently it would need extensive remodeling which could exceed \$500,000. (p.39) Some of the other buildings also had been damaged during its vacant years. The Roman Church had kept a skeleton crew on campus after it closed to maintain the facility, but they gave up heating the buildings during the 77-78 winter. "This caused quite a bit of damage to the walls and ceilings in some of the buildings." (Schulz) If the school was to be moved, the question of where to place the faculty also had to be considered.

Another major concern was the fact that there was no Wisconsin Synod congregation in the city of Prairie du Chien. The Mission Board of the Western Wisconsin District had held exploratory services that indicated a nucleus of 20 communicants that would be interested in the establishment of a mission. Based on this fact, the CHE proposed to the Mission Board that they could use the chapel on campus as a mission church and that two classrooms on the campus could be used for a grade school. (1978 Report to the Ten Districts, p.40)

The CHE wasn't looking through rose colored glasses when they stated that purchasing the Campion Campus would have some

disadvantages. Immediately recognizable was the concern over whether or not the Prairie du Chien location would be at all conducive to recruiting students. This question was obvious because of the lack of Synod membership in the area. This would cause students to travel greater distances and subsequently it was felt, hinder parents from sending children to a school at this location. Because of this and other reasons, a number of letters were sent to the CHE protesting the move. (p.41)

In spite of the problems and disadvantages that were visible at this time, they did not stop the CHE from proposing to the Synod that it purchase the Campion Campus. Their direction for the Synod was very clear in this matter. They also showed in their report that they had considered at least six alternative solutions for the crowded conditions that the New Ulm campus and, to a smaller degree, Northwestern campus were experiencing. A few of the alternatives included 1) not buying Campion and leaving things the same 2) put both Northwestern Prep and MLA on the Prairie Campus 3) not buy Prairie and begin phased construction for the prep schools 4) Joint prep school at Watertown and Northwestern college at PDC 5) Combining both preps in Watertown and both colleges at DMLC 6) find a new location for a prep school 7) use the prep schools only for boys and leave them at the same location and 8) Make New Ulm and Watertown a prep-junior college school and make PDC the senior college for both. All of these alternatives were looked at and carefully weighed. In their

report, the CHE gave specific reasons why these alternatives weren't chosen. (p.43-45)

Based on the extensive research that the CHE committed to the project, keeping in mind both the advantages and disadvantages of the decision, they concluded their report by recommending to the Synod to purchase the Campion Campus. As an Addendum to their report, the Commission asked that this same report be duplicated and sent to the pastor's, teachers, and synodical delegates as quickly as possible because of the significance and the far-reaching ramifications this report would have on the Synod as a whole. At the same time that this proposal for distribution was approved, the Synodical Council also authorized the Board of Trustees to make a second down payment of \$25,000 so that the property at PDC could be kept off the market and held until a decision could be reached. (p.48)

In spite of this recommendation by the CHE, there were strong voices against the move to Prairie du Chien. One of these voices was the Board of Control for Martin Luther Academy. This was no spontaneous decision on their part either. Their 1978 report indicates that they spent a great deal of time studying the possible relocation of MLA to Prairie du Chien. This included a look at enrollment radius, student potential, recruitment feasibility, and proximity studies. (p.67) They also restudied and updated the proposals for phased building on Campus #2. In addition to this, the Board of Control and faculty of MLA took a tour of the

proposed site in Prairie. They based their negative reaction to the proposal on two main points. 1) The loss of recruitment because of the poor location in regard to WELS communicant membership in the area and 2) the cost of remodeling and running the physical plant of the Campion Campus. In view of this, the Board recommended that the Synod forego purchase of Campion and seriously consider a phased building project on Campus #2. They felt that this building program could be carried out in an 8-10 year period. (Schulz)

Not only did the MLA board of control recommend not purchasing the campus in Prairie du Chien, but the Board of Control's for both Northwestern College and Prep indicated their opposal to the project and submitted a counterproposal in their 1978 report to the 10 Districts. (p.56-61) These Board of Control's were concerned because the CHE had also recommended that NPS discontinue its two track (Pastor-Teacher) system to just the pastor system and send the teacher students to Prairie within a three year period. It was also suggested that even those in the pastor's course could be sent to Prairie when the time came that more room was needed on campus. The College was also concerned about what this would do to future recruitment. Due to many of the same reasons that the MLA Board of control stated, the Boards from Northwestern recommended that MLA begin phased construction on Campus #2.

An extremely important decision needed to be made concerning the future of our schools. It was also obvious that

there were a lot of differing opinions over what exactly should be done. In view of the seriousness of this matter, a special Synod convention was called in July of 1978 for one reason. "To consider the proposal of the CHE to purchase the Campion Campus to relieve the crowding on the campus in New Ulm and in Watertown." (1978 Special Synod Convention Proceedings, p.3)

The business of the convention began with a report from the Board of Trustees. Their point of view was clear, "We feel constrained to add also that we can see little or no financial gain in phases construction." (p.15) They went on to state that the cost of phased construction would hamper other Synod programs for years to come. This would have a "devastating effect upon our balanced work program." (p.15) The Trustees included in their report figures for the take over costs of the Campion campus and proposals for the payment of these costs.

The main item of the convention was brought by Floor Committee #5. It was their job to bring a workable proposal to the convention floor over what course of action should be taken concerning the CHE recommendation to purchase Campion. This committee brought to the floor a divided report. Report #1 favored the purchase of the site and the phasing out of the teacher-training program at NPS. Report #2 rejected the CHE's proposal and supported building on Campus #2 in New Ulm. A third report advocated that the Campion property be purchased for use as a junior college. The second report was the first

that was presented to the convention. 28 speakers addressed the subject but it was finally rejected by a vote of 220 to 65. Immediately thereafter the third report was withdrawn and attention turned to Report #1. Again, over twenty speakers voiced their opinion concerning this matter and finally it was adopted section by section and then as a whole. (NL, p.257)

The decision was finally reached! The Synod had moved to purchase the Campion campus for \$2,800,000 with another \$560,000 to be gathered for refurbishing and remodeling. Money was borrowed to make the original payment. The "Reaching Out" Funds paid the remaining debt on the purchase and remodeling costs. (Schulz) Even though this price seems at first glance to be a great amount of money, it was really a good buy for the money. In fact, after the purchase, this campus was appraised and insured for about \$15,000,000. As Pres. Frey put it, "The Synod was able to acquire the complex at a price which can only be described as a 'steal', to put it mildly."

Just because a decision had been reached, didn't mean that the hard work was all over. Quite a bit had to be accomplished so that the doors of Martin Luther Preparatory School could open in the fall of 1979. Only 12 months were available to move an entire school 235 miles to a deserted campus. To facilitate this move, the special Synod Convention of 1978 adopted a number of enabling resolutions. One such implementing resolution read that the MLA Board of Control should still serve on the MLPS Board and that "the CHE be responsible for implementing synodical resolutions regarding

the school at Prairie." (1978 Proceedings, p.34) To carry out this resolution the CHE appointed six men to serve on an Interim Committee. These men spent a considerable amount of time trying to decide and carry out many difficulties that were before them.

It was of the immediate importance of remodeling that an architectural firm was hired. Based on their study and review of the buildings it was decided that the oldest major building on campus, Lawler Hall, would not be used. The factors that played into this decision were the extremely high rates for remodeling and the poor energy efficiency rating that the building held. (NL, p.152) In turn, another large building was changed into an administration-academic-library building. An additional remodeling expense entailed changing the campus from a school designed for an all-male student body to meeting the needs of a co-educational program. It was an added bonus to the Committee that they were able to hire Mr. Karl Kuckhan as a business manager for the school. He brought to MLPS considerable knowledge and experience in short and long-range financial planning, programming and budgeting. (NL, p.152)

The Interim Committee also concerned itself with various other projects concerning the move to the Prairie du Chien location. In keeping with a synodical resolution, they began looking into ways with which they could provide week-end bus service for the resident students. They were also pleased that a mission congregation was formerly organized by its own new pastor, Rev. Clarke Sievert. Certain projects also had to be

looked into in the chapel. Being a former Jesuit school, there were confessional booths that needed to be replaced. This wasn't a difficult task especially when the Committee compared it to the question of what should be done about the enormous stain glass window in the chapel, valued at over \$200,000. The focus of this picture was the Mother Mary. The opinion on the committee was that no hasty decision should be made on this matter. Not only did the buildings of the campus have to be remodeled, but the outside plant of the campus also had to be taken care of. A number of congregations organized volunteer labor so that a number of trees and unneeded brush could be removed and to give the whole grounds a general sprucing up.

Perhaps, the biggest headache in the whole moving process had to do with faculty housing. "Within the time frame of less than a year, it was apparent that the biggest problem would be in providing faculty housing." When the faculty first toured the campus during the spring of 1978, they were told that they would have housing set up on the campus. (Jaster) However, the city could not guarantee sewer and water to the designated area by July 1, 1979, the target moving date for the faculty. The Interim Committee reported that from the outset they had the policy of establishing the faculty homes off-campus. Reasons cited were 1) gives the Synod flexibility regarding the sale of these homes, 2) avoids the mistake of placing the homes in the wrong place on campus and jeopardizing future campus planning, and 3) offers better faculty environment.

(1979 Reports, p.29)

Housing was secured for most of the faculty one and a half miles from campus in a new sub-division. A handful of faculty members decided to purchase their own homes in various locations around Prairie du Chien. To carry out the building of the homes in the new sub-division, a contract was made with a pre-fab builder. To decide who got which home, Pres. Siegler appointed a faculty committee of men who wouldn't be living there to decide who should go where. This was done on the basis of family needs and the available floor plans.

(Schneider) The homes were to be done by July 1st as mentioned earlier. The problem was that the houses weren't ready for various reasons. This made for a late start for most of the professors who weren't able to move to PDC until right before school started. Once they did move, they had to stay in a variety of places; girl's dorm, camp, recreational vehicles, or motels until the housing was finally finished by the end of September and even into October. During this time, many things were stored on the Campion Campus. Some of these things were damaged due to the dampness caused by the heavy rains that summer. Dean Schneider well summarized this period of time for the faculty, "It was a very inconvenient and hectic time to say the least, arriving late and not being totally familiar with the campus and facilities."

A few details also had to be taken care of on the New Ulm side of things. All the Synod owned homes of the MLA faculty that were below the hill were sold. The college professors that lived below the hill also vacated their homes and moved

into the homes of those that were left by the MLA faculty above the hill. Some of the property on Campus #2 was also sold and is still being sold today. (Schulz) There wasn't much of a problem moving MLA's school and athletic equipment from New Ulm to Prairie du Chien because they weren't able to take much. Most of the equipment had been shared with the college and had to stay on the campus. The problem was that the new high school had to virtually start from scratch to get the things needed to support an independent educational operation. This involved athletic and science equipment , pianos, organ, band instruments, media equipment, and duplicating and office equipment. (1979 Report, p.32) It also wasn't the easiest task in the world to organize from scratch a 6-7000 volume library on the new campus. (Jaster) Some equipment was supplied, however, by the closing of Northwestern Lutheran Academy (NLA).

One would be remiss in a report concerning this topic not to also include at least a little information about NLA in view of their role in the starting of MLPS although this in itself could be an entire paper. To be brief, for quite a number of years various questions had been raised concerning our Synodical school in Mobridge, South Dakota. It was recognized that something would have to be done about the low enrollment and future remodeling needs. Thoughts were raised that this could be turned into an area high school or that it could even be moved to the Southwest or West Coast. (1978 Report, p.32) The matter was, in effect, tabled for a year

while the congregations in the Dakota-Montana District re-evaluated the need and support they would give to NLA. Although there were strong feelings expressed that the school should remain open, it was decided by the Synod that it would be best if it would close. The date given by when this should take place was August 8, 1979. (1979 Proceedings, p.84) This closure would have a big impact on the opening of MLPS.

By further resolve of the Synod in 1979, it was offered to the students of NLA that they could continue their schooling at MLPS. In connection with this, it was recommended that for the course of their secondary training be reimbursed the cost of three round trips per year. (1979 Proceedings, p.85) At this time, a number of calls were sent and accepted by NLA professors to come and teach at MLPS. This was especially helpful because of the higher than expected initial enrollment. Along with the professors and students, a great deal of needed equipment also came from NLA. (Schulz)

The road wasn't always easy, but by the time the fall of 1979 came around, the doors at Martin Luther Preparatory School were ready to open. To prepare the students for the move, the entire student body of MLA took a tour of the campus during the spring of 1979. The Synod also made arrangements to have the belongings of the students making the transfer shipped to the campus during the summer. (Schneider) The long journey culminated in MLPS's first opening service on September 4, 1979, with over 340 students. It was further marked on October 14th, 1979, when the facilities were

officially dedicated. The speaker at this service was the newly elected Synod president, Pastor Carl Mischke. On that day the campus was overflowing with people, people eager to see the new campus, people enthused and excited about the training of future church workers in this new setting.

Now that a number of years have passed since the move to Prairie du Chien, one can't help but reflect on these years and also on the direction the school has taken since that time. No doubt, some things would be done differently if they had to be done again. I'm sure that most of the professors that had to wait for housing would have preferred a different route. And yet, it is good that things can't be redone. We recall that the Board of Control and the faculty of MLA did not at first favor the move. But since they have been there, the blessings of the school have become self-evident. I cannot help but be impressed with the evangelical attitude these men showed during this crucial time. Even though they had opposed the move in the best interests of the school, once the Synod made its decision these men willfully accepted it and worked hard to give their best to the new school. "We must credit the administration and faculty for its dedication toward the worker-training goal and objective of the school." (Schulz)

One of the major blessings that MLPS has experienced is that is now more of a Synod wide prep school. It has students coming from every district and all most every conference in the Synod. It is the only prep school that has this kind of a record. It now also has a higher percentage of students that

carry on their studies at DMLC or NWC. In this area, it has the highest percentage of the prep schools. (Schulz) This is aided by the fact that it has very few commuter students or general course students from the area around it. From this we see that the "remote" location also has its advantages. The fact that the students have their own identity is also a real plus. The professors also can enjoy more freedom on this campus, being able to try new things without first getting college permission. (Schneider)

Anyone who has ever had to decide on whether they should move or not, knows that moving is no simple matter. Having moved four times in less than three years, I can personally relate to this statement. One has to consider if it is really necessary to move. One has to consider how it will affect the people involved. Extra strain is placed on the family budget during the time of a move. Financial matters have to be carefully ironed out. Careful planning must be done to contact people who will help with the move. If moving is a complicated process when it only involves one family, one can perhaps better understand what an enormous task it was to uproot an entire high school and its faculty and move it over 200 miles. This was a tremendous project which was carried out in our Synod. It involved years of studies, untold hours of hard work, a great amount of money, and the dedicated service of countless people. May this paper help us to understand how MLA became MLPS.

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1979.

WRITTEN INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH FOUR INDIVIDUALS

Pastor Conrad Frey-(At the time of the move, President of DMLC)

Prof. Herbert Jaster-(Professor at MLA-MLPS)

Prof. James Schneider-(At the time of the move, Dean of Students for
MLA-MLPS)

Pastor Edmund Schulz-(Chairman of the Board of Control for MLA-MLPS)

FOUR ARTICLES QUOTED IN THE PAPER ARE CREDITTED TO PASTOR FREY

1975 Annual Report to the College Board of Control

1976 Annual Report to the College Board of Control

"Response to the Preliminary Report on the Future Location of MLA"
(November 23, 1976)

"Impact of Increasing Enrollment on DMLC from the Point of View of a
Shared Campus" (February 25, 1977)