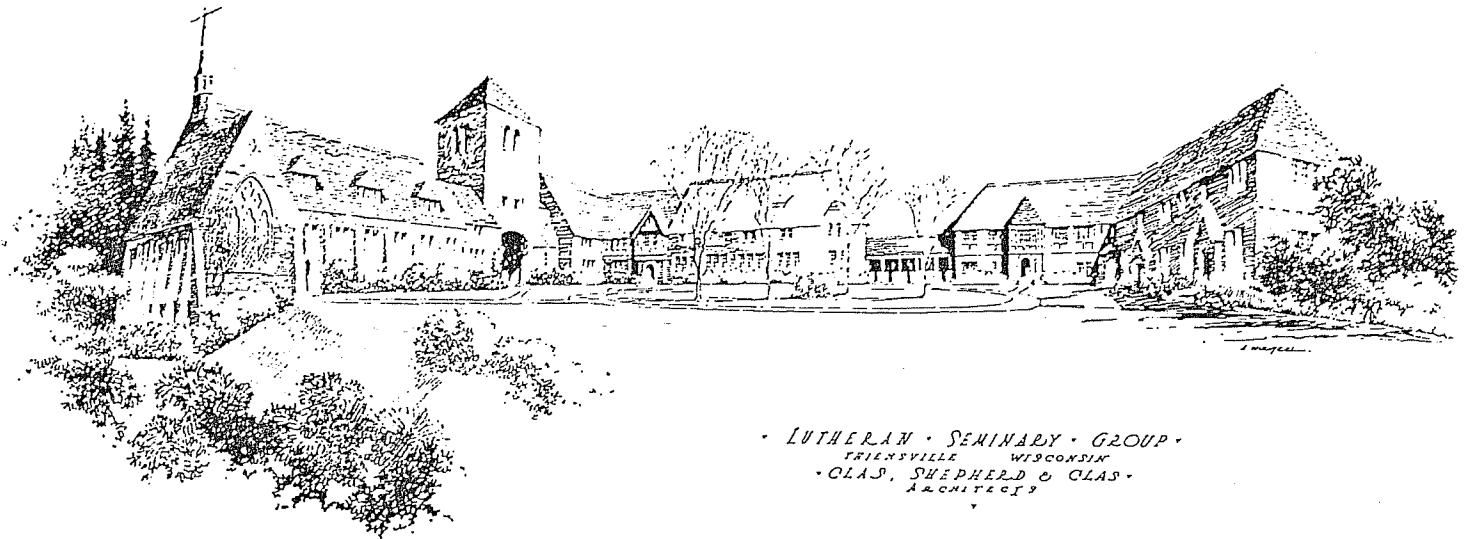


The Building of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary



Church History
Professor Brenner
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By
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The Building of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at Mequon

Introduction

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has been training pastors since 1863 when it opened a seminary at Watertown, Wisconsin. The stay at Watertown was only 7 years, for in 1870 they began sending their pastoral candidates to Concordia, St. Louis as part of an agreement with the Missouri Synod. This arrangement lasted only 7 years. In 1878, the Wisconsin Synod once again took it upon themselves to train their own pastors. This time they opened their seminary in Milwaukee, where it resided until 1893 when it was moved to Wauwatosa. For 36 years the seminary called Wauwatosa its home. It was the most stable home that the Wisconsin Synod's seminary had had up until this time. Yet by 1919, the facilities at Wauwatosa proved to be neither sufficient for nor capable of handling the growing needs of the Synod. At the Synod convention of 1919 the wheels for building a new seminary were put into motion. Over the next 8 years, there was much preparatory work that needed to be done: a site had to be selected, money needed to be raised, plans needed to be drawn up, and many obstacles needed to be overcome. By the 1929 school year, the new seminary at Mequon was complete. This year, 1996, is the 66th year that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has called Mequon its home. There have been some alterations along the way, but the original plant is still intact and serves as the training grounds of the pastors of the Wisconsin Synod.

The Story

1919

For some years, there had been a groaning in the Synod that the current site in Wauwatosa was insufficient. There was no room for the students' recreation on the plant. *"They were forced at first to run around on the streets. Eventually they had two lawn tennis courts, but only two, on which they took turns playing the entire day."*¹ As it was, there was also a problem with the lay of

the land. Every time that it rained, there were two to three inches of water that flooded the sidewalks as well as the basements of the professors' homes. There was no room to accommodate any more professors. There was no space to build any more houses on the Seminary grounds. And then there was the simple and most important fact that there was no room for an increase in students.²

Over the years there had been talk of buying some land that surrounded the Seminary property. The Seminary at Wauwatosa was located on a portion of the Pabst farm which had been donated by Captain Pabst. The remainder of the farm began to be subdivided into lots. In 1917, the lots were being sold rather cheaply, for \$1,500.00 per acre, but the Synod did not pursue any of these avenues immediately.³ After 2 years of remaining idle on the matter, the land prices had risen to a supposed \$6,000.00 per acre. Yet Professor Koehler was assured that the land could be purchased for around \$4,250.00 per acre.⁴

In August of 1919 the synod met in convention at New Ulm. Karl Koehler presented a plan for expansion of the Seminary. During the course of discussion it was revealed that two lots to the south of the current property had already been bought by Karl Koehler and another party (Briesen).⁵ At the end of the discussions it was resolved that *"the joint president name a committee of three, which in turn would recommend a committee of seven as an executive committee for matters related to the expansion of the Seminary."*⁶ The members of the "Committee of Seven" were:

Pastor John Brenner, Milwaukee, WI
Pastor J. Gauss, Jenera, OH
J. H. Schacht, Red Wing, MN
E. W. Zutz, Norfolk, NE
F. W. Gamm, Watertown, WI
Phil. Lucas, Milwaukee, WI
W. Upmeier Milwaukee, WI

Ex-officio members:
W. Bodamer
M. Lehninger
J. R. Baumann⁷

It was also resolved that the "Committee of Seven" should get in touch with the Highland Company before September 15, 1919 concerning the Pabst lots adjacent to the Seminary which had been offered to the Synod for a price of \$35,705, and proceed according to their best judgment.⁸ Concerning the matter of selecting and purchasing of properties, the "Committee of Seven" was given the authority 1) to direct the Board of Trustees to make the proposed purchase, and 2) to look around for new sites.⁹ It was also resolved to spend no more money on the current property.¹⁰

The reason for not spending any more money on the current property and for giving the authority to the "Committee of Seven" to look for new sites was that the current Seminary property's deed had a stipulation attached to it. When the property was first offered to the synod by Captain Pabst, he set the conditions "*that the Synod immediately undertake the building of an educational institution there for no less than \$30,000; if in the future the property were abandoned, the proceeds of the sale, including the buildings erected, were to be divided between the Synod and the Pabst estate.*"¹¹ It was the interpretation of many that if the current property were ever used by the Synod for something other than educational purposes that this stipulation would be put into effect and all investments in the property would be lost.¹² The fact that the Synod had no clear title to the land together with the restrictions that were on the new lots for sale and the changes in the subdivision plans, made building on the current site unacceptable, and therefore spending any more money on the current plant would be a waste.¹³ But if both the conditions on the old property and the restrictions on the new acquisitions could be removed, expansion of the current plant would be feasible. As the "Committee of Seven" met with representatives from the Pabst estate, expansions seemed out of the question for the Pabst representative gave "unequivocal refusals" to both requests for removal of conditions and the restrictions.¹⁴ For the remainder of 1919 the "Committee of Seven" went about the appraising of various sites.

On November 2, the “Committee of Seven” invited all the district presidents, the Board of Trustees and any member of the Synod to come to Milwaukee on November 14 to make suggestions and give input with regards to the selection of a new site.¹⁵ From the sites up for consideration, the Bues farm on Greenfield Avenue seemed to have the greatest support so far, and perhaps that was the reason for a resolution being made and passed by those in attendance that the new site for the Seminary be “*in or near Milwaukee*”.¹⁶

1920

In July of 1920 there was a special meeting of the Synod in Watertown, WI. During the discussions of the Seminary situation, there was a proposal to purchase a piece of land in Oconomowoc for \$60,000. However, this site was rejected because the land was near the lake and too low for sewerage.¹⁷ The only thing that was resolved by the Synod at this time was that the new site for the Seminary should be “*in or near Milwaukee*”, as those present at the November 14, 1919 meeting in Milwaukee had decided.¹⁸ The reason for this was so that the Seminary would be accessible to the members of the Synod via the rapid transit systems (i.e. trains and major roads) and also close to many established churches and schools.¹⁹

The whole matter was sent back to committee for another year. The search for a site continued, but there were a couple of factors that would play into the “Committee of Seven’s” decision process. First, the site that was to be selected was to be in or near Milwaukee, and second, the Bues farm on Greenfield Avenue had already been purchased by the Board of Trustees, but the committee was advised not to let the fact that the Bues farm was already the property of the Synod play a part in the decision.²⁰

After the special meeting of the Synod, J. P. Koehler took it upon himself to see if there was a way that the Seminary building could be modified to meet the needs of a growing student body.

Plans were made and drawn up in hopes that the present structure could continue to be used at least for the near future. ²¹ But when the architect Holst presented the plans to the Industrial Commission in Madison, it was rejected because it did not meet building codes. This was due to the fact that the current building was not fireproof.²²

1921

In August of 1921 the Synod Convention met in Milwaukee. It was here that the “Committee of Seven” came with their final recommendations. From the information that the committee had gathered, it had concluded that any projects that had to deal with the present site were not feasible. Remodeling the existing building was ruled out by the Industrial Commission in Madison, and the representatives of the Pabst estate made it clear that it would be impossible to get a clear title to the current property as they would not drop the original conditions of the Seminary property nor the restrictions on any future purchases.

The “Committee of Seven’s” recommendations were as follows:

- ① Build a new seminary plant on a new site
- ② The formation of a Building Committee who would be in charge of the entire project
Building Committee to
 - ▶ Select site
 - ▶ Make plans
 - ▶ Let contracts
 - ▶ Have oversight of construction
 - ▶ In charge of the collection of necessary fundingBuilding Committee to consist of 3 pastors and 4 lay people
- ③ All necessary preparations to be made immediately
- ④ Building to occur when 2/3 of moneys collected; This money was to be kept in a separate fund
- ⑤ Building costs not to exceed \$500,000²³

All of the recomondations of the “Committee of Seven” were unanimously passed.²⁴ In addition, resolutions were passed that gave authority to the Building Committee to sell and buy properties. The Building Committee was chosen by the Seminary Board and the Board of Trustees.

Its members consisted of

Pastor John Brenner
Prof. J. P. Koehler
Pastor H. K. Moussa (after death replaced by Mr.
Wm. Bensemann)

Mr. E. Von Breisen
Mr. Fred Gamm
Mr. Theo. Buuck
Mr. Gustave Sengbusch²⁵

In addition to the Building Committee there was to be an Advisory Committee which was made up of 1 pastor and 1 lay man from each district.²⁶

1922

On April 26, 1922, the Building Committee met with the Advisory Committee to assess the current Seminary and three potential sites (the Bues farm, the Van Dyke place, and the site near Mequon). At the end of the meeting the Advisory Committee felt that it could not make a decision at this time, so they left the matter of selecting a site in the hands of the Building Committee.²⁷

For the next few months the Building Committee went about its task of assessing potential sites for the new Seminary. During this time, the Bues farm and the Van Dyke place were practically eliminated from consideration by the Building Committee because of the proposed streets that were to run through them. But after meeting with the Milwaukee County Land Commissioners who seemed to take an interest in the whole project, an agreement was arranged by which the proposed streets could be placed in such a way that they would not interfere with any buildings that would be put up on either the Van Dyke or the Bues sites.²⁸ Matters were even more improved after meeting with Wauwatosa's Council. The Council of Wauwatosa saw no reason why streets had to go through the Van Dyke property at all. The only condition that they had was that they maintain the rights to enter the property in order to maintain a tunnel some 30 feet below.²⁹

On December 14, 1922, there was another meeting of the Building Committee and the Advisory Committee. The recommendations the Building Committee received were to delay no longer and to get an architect, come up with a financial plan to pay for the project, and to advise the

Board of Trustees to purchase the Van Dyke site. After four years of hard work, the goal of a new Seminary seemed to be just around the corner, but the next four years would show that this project would not be an easy task.

1923

In January of 1923 the Building Committee began its public campaign for the new Seminary as it published an article in the Northwestern Lutheran recounting the history that had led up to this point in the Seminary project. For the remaining years of the Seminary project, the Northwestern Lutheran would serve as the main vehicle of information between the Building Committee and the congregations at large. There were also some circulars that were sent out to all of the congregations of the Synod to be handed out to each communicant member. These circulars were used to inform as well as to motivate interest in the building project. Even after the Seminary was complete there were flyers sent out to show people the new Seminary that they had helped to build.³⁰ This form of public campaign was necessary if a new Seminary was to be built. The Synod needed the backing of the people and, more importantly, their money.

In February of 1923 it was announced that the Van Dyke property had indeed been bought by the Board of Trustees for a price of \$40,000 (\$5,000 down and \$5,000 a year for the next 7 years).³¹ There was also added to the Advisory Committee three men who were in the construction business: William C. Bensemman, J. W. Jungbluth, and Charles Grunewald. Following another of the suggestions that the Advisory Committee had given the Building Committee, an architect was hired: Claus, Shepherd, and Claus.³² But before the architects had even been hired, Professor J. K. Koehler had already drawn in depth ground plans and detailed sketches of the buildings.³³ The architects followed those original sketches of Professor J. K. Koehler almost exactly except for it was on a larger scale(see photo in Faith Life, Vol. 64, No. 1, p. 13).³⁴

In March of 1923, the Building Committee, recognizing that the new Seminary together with the growing debt of the Synod would place a huge burden on the Synod, “felt that the erection of a new Seminary should not increase the indebtedness of the Synod by one cent. But this is better still, build the Seminary and wipe out the debt (of the Synod) at the same time.”³⁵ The idea was to have a joint collection for both the construction of a new Seminary as well as debt reduction. The combined estimated money that would needed to be collected in order to achieve both goals was figured at about \$750,000. In April of 1923 the Board of Trustees put this plan into effect when it placed Fred Gamm of the Building Committee in charge of the collection for the new Seminary and debt reduction.³⁶ In May of 1923, the collection had officially begun.³⁷

At the Synod convention of 1923 the Seminary project took a sharp turn. From the time that the new Seminary had originally been considered in 1919, the debt of the Synod had been increased by nearly \$200,000.³⁸ Many in the Synod felt that undertaking a project of such a high cost (\$500,000)³⁹ with a debt that already stood at \$289,000⁴⁰ would not be the most prudent action, even with the Building Committee’s plan for the joint collection. Thus the “Resolution of ‘23” was passed. The resolution reads, “**The building of the new Seminary shall not be begun until the present debts have been paid and the full amount necessary for such building is at hand.**”⁴¹

The “Resolution of ‘23” nullified the previous resolution made in 1921 to begin construction of the new Seminary when two thirds of the money was collected, and it now gave the Building Committee an entirely different task than its title would suggest. It was now the Building Committee’s responsibility to wipe out the debt of the Synod entirely as well as to raise all of the monies for the Seminary, which all together totaled approximately \$750,000 needed. According to the resolution passed in 1921, the Building Committee would have had to collect only \$280,000 before construction could begin. According to the “Resolution of ‘23”, they now had to raise two

and a half times that amount before anything could begin.

1924

The Building Committee began its preaching of stewardship at the end of 1923 and preaching stewardship was about all the Committee could do in 1924. The plans for the Seminary were complete. The land was bought. The only thing that was missing was the money to build. From the conception of the plan which called for a joint collection for the new Seminary and debt reduction, it had been deduced that if every communicant member were to give 1.5% of his yearly income (an average figure of \$1,000 income per year), the entire sum that was needed to fulfill the "Resolution of 23" (\$750,000) could be reached within one year's time.

At this time in the Synod's history, facts and figures were the way stewardship was done, so a ^{quota} cōda system was put into effect to raise the necessary monies. The Synod knew that they needed \$750,000. They also knew that of their 150,000 communicant members, 50,000 of them were wage earners who made approximately \$1,000 annually. In order to come up with the ^{quotas} cōdas, they took the amount necessary and divided it by the number of total wage earners ($\$750,000 / 50,000 = \15). Once they knew the amount that the wage earner should be giving to the project, they took the per wage earner amount and divided it by the average income ($\$15 / \$1,000 = .015 = 1.5\%$). They then had the percentage at which every wage earner, no matter how much or how little they made, should be aiming. A simple figure of \$15 could not be set as the ^{quota} cōda, because for some that would be far too great a burden to ask.

But the preaching of stewardship did not begin with ^{quotas} cōdas, but with the Gospel. ^{Quotas} Cōdas were merely a guideline for people to know how much they should strive to give to the project so that they could each do their fair share. The main point of emphasis in all of the articles in the Northwestern Lutheran that touched on the matter of the collection centered around the task at hand:

building a “school for the prophets” of our Synod. The purpose for the collection was to have a facility so that men could be trained to preach God’s Word to others and to care for souls. Many times, however, the task at hand was overshadowed by the overwhelming call for each member of the Synod to do their fair share in the joint collection.

The money was still coming in at a fairly good rate, but not at the rate that had originally been expected. The money that had already been collected was invested in April of 1924 in order that interest could be earned while the Synod waited for the rest of the money to come in. This proved to be a wise investment, as through the years over \$27, 000 was earned in interest.⁴²

1925

While 1924 was a slow year for progress in the Seminary project, 1925 would be even slower. The collection had come nowhere close to meeting the expectations that the Building Committee had had. (Note: If the original resolution of 1921 would not have been dissolved because of the “Resolution of 23”, the amount necessary, 2/3 of the entire building cost, \$280,000, would have been available and building could have begun.) In a June issue of the Northwestern Lutheran, Pastor John Brenner, Chairman of the Building Committee, deplored the fact that the cooperation that originally had been expected for this project had not taken place, and he related the bewilderment and concern that the Seminary now had as to what, if anything, would be happening to the project.⁴³

At the Synod Convention in 1925, there seemed to be a ray of hope. During the course of events, it was memorialized that the Synod should start building as much as the current monies would allow. The feeling among many was that now was time, but due to the resounding echo of the “Resolution of ‘23” the motion was defeated.⁴⁴ The Synod was convinced that the necessary monies must be collected before anything could happen. There was still a long way to go before

the collection would be complete. The Building Committee knew what they had to do and so they came back from another Synod convention with nothing to do but raise more money. One change of positions did take place on the Building Committee. Fred Gamm stepped down as treasurer and was replaced by Pastor John Brenner, Chairman, who now held two positions.⁴⁵

1926

As the year opened Pastor Brenner announced in the Northwestern Lutheran that he looked forward to starting the building of the new Seminary in the fall of 1927, hoping that by then the collection would be complete. While Pastor Brenner was filled with optimism, he also related the fact that there were 125 congregations that he had not heard from. This was definitely disappointing, but Pastor Brenner tried his best to spur on the others brothers in the ministry as he wrote, “Brethren, has not the time for energetic action arrived? Nothing is gained by procrastination, much is lost.”⁴⁶

Throughout the rest of the year, Pastor Brenner had articles in the Northwestern Lutheran in which he tried to be motivational to the members of the Synod. He tried to stress the point that quotas are not a bad thing.⁴⁷ They are part of our Christian obligation. We have a responsibility to preach the Word to the world and the way that we can all do this is by training men to go and preach the Word. And in order to train these men we must have a place to train them.⁴⁸ It is exactly that task that the Synod had undertaken, and as part of the Synod, this was the work that every member of the Synod had also undertaken.⁴⁹

1927

This year was the turning point in the Seminary project. At the Synod convention there were some interesting developments. It was brought to the Synod’s attention that the New Ulm campus was in need of some additional buildings for classrooms and a dining hall, as well as some

renovations to the music hall. A resolution was passed to proceed with these projects. Part of the finances for these projects were to be added to the "New Seminary and Synod Debt Reduction Collection". This now meant that the sum total of the collection was to be set at \$750,000. (Note: Over the course of time there had been some altering as to the amount the new Seminary would cost. The projected cost was now closer to \$400, 000 than \$500,000)⁵⁰

The New Ulm projects were somewhat of a surprise, but not nearly as much of a surprise as the resolution that the Synod passed concerning the building of the new Seminary. The resolution reads, "The Building Committee is hereby given authority to begin building operation as soon as it considers it the proper time to do so."⁵¹ The "Resolution of '23" was dead. There was nothing to stop the Building Committee from finally going ahead with the plans that they had held for so long. But that leads us to the third interesting development at the Synod convention of 1927.

In the report from the Seminary Building Committee, Mr. E. Von Briesen enlightened the Synod on the new developments with the Van Dyke property.

The Seminary Building Committee feels that before starting any building on the present Van Dyke site it should inform the Synod fully in reference to the situation.

Since the purchase of the Van Dyke site and especially in the last years there has been a great deal of development in the "Rapid Transit" transportation system. At the present time we can ride from Second and Sycamore to the heart of Waukesha in thirty-five minutes. The transportation system will undoubtedly develop more. The result of this is that one can now build a seminary building within twenty miles of the heart of Milwaukee and reach the city as rapidly as one can from the present site.

The Seminary Building Committee has been offered \$95,000.00 for the Van Dyke site. It feels that the value of this site is somewhat more. Some members of the committee feel that the Synod can not afford a \$100, 000.00 site for its seminary building when other property can undoubtedly be purchased at a cost of approximately \$25,000 to \$40,000. The advantage or disadvantage of a site somewhat removed from the city should be thoroughly considered by your committee or your committee and the Board of Trustees, and if the Synod feels that the question of the sale of the present site and the purchase of a new site should be left to the discretion of some committee, proper resolutions authorizing the sale of the present site in whole or in part should be adopted, and also a resolution

authorizing the purchase of a new site.⁵²

The entire Seminary building project now had to be reconsidered somewhat due to these developments.

Within a very short time the Van Dyke property was sold for \$107,500, which was a \$67,000 profit.⁵³ Now the search for a new site for the Seminary was once again on the agenda for the Building Committee. The criteria for the new site was that it be in or near Milwaukee, that it have adequate transportation facilities, concrete roads, bus or electric rail service, and that it would be preferable to have a site that was not cut up by streets.⁵⁴ The one site that fit all of these requirements was the site near Mequon. In a November issue of the Northwestern Lutheran it was announced that the Mequon site was the selection of the Building Committee.⁵⁵ The site near Mequon was to be purchased at a cost of \$25,000 in the very near future.⁵⁶ On December 15, 1927, the Building Committee met with the Advisory Committee at St. John's on 8th and Vilet.⁵⁷ This was the final conference between these two committees. The building plans were revised and approved. All that was left for the architects to do was a little final work and the technical specifics.⁵⁸

1928

In February of 1928, the ground was broken at the site near Mequon as a well driller cut through the surface.⁵⁹ There was no pomp or ceremony, but work had begun. It was not until May 14, 1928, that work in earnest was begun on the actual plant.⁶⁰ The plant itself was to occupy the highest point on the property. Following the original plans that J. P. Koehler had made for the Van Dyke site, the Seminary buildings would form a segment of a circle. Due to the topography of the land the original plans for the Seminary had to be somewhat altered as part of the buildings would be built right into the side of the hill that the Seminary was to occupy. The chapel was removed

from the administrative building and added to the library and classroom building. This was actually quite advantageous, as the chapel could now be used as a classroom or lecture hall.⁶¹ Consequently the gym was placed under the chapel which was built into the side of the hill. This too was advantageous, as long windows could be placed in such a way so that the gym would be lit during the day by the sun.

As the new plans for the Seminary stood there would be three basic buildings: the education building, the administrative building, and the dorm. The dorm building consisted of four regular units and one half unit. Each regular unit had the capacity to hold up to sixteen students. The units were divided up into an upper and a lower section. Each section contained seven rooms. There were two bedrooms that could each handle four students, four studies that could each handle two students, and a bathroom that was to take care of the needs of eight students. Originally there was to be a six foot wide corridor that was to connect all of the units, but due to cost and sound considerations, it was dropped. In the lower portion of the dorm there were to be laundry facilities, storage rooms, a carpenters' shop, and a lounge area for the students.⁶²

The administrative building was to contain the kitchen and dining hall, which was to have a 100 student capacity.⁶³ A hospital section was also in the plans. It would contain a sick bay, a nurses room, a bathroom, and additional rooms for visitors. There were also to be quarters for the maids. But the highlight of the administrative building was to be the Director's residence. The Director would now live right in the heart of the Seminary.⁶⁴

Between the administrative building and the education building there was to be an arch to let people into the inner circle of the Seminary. Above this archway there was to be a tower. A tower might seem a bit extravagant, but there was a need for such a structure. In order to achieve the necessary water pressure, it was thought that there had to be an elevated water tank. What better

place for a water tank than in a tower, and so the new Seminary had a tower. Also housed in the tower was a faculty room for meetings.

The educational portion of the building was to consist of three classrooms, 25ft. x 25ft. each, on the first floor. The library and reading rooms, made up the second floor. In addition to these rooms there was to be an amusement room in the basement together with the gym and showers, as well as a 32ft. x 60ft. chapel and a 32ft. x 21ft. committee room at the rear, on the remainder of the first floor. All in all the Building Committee had almost every inch of the buildings designated for some specific purpose.⁶⁵

The exterior of the buildings was to have a definite Lutheran look. Part of the buildings were to be fashioned after the Wartburg, while the rest were to be done in a complementary style that would blend in. The walls were to be done in a salmon colored brick with Lannon stone in the detailed areas around windows and doors. The roof of the buildings was to be done with a variegated slate. It was designed for simplicity and charm.⁶⁶ Even the approach was done in a way to highlight the beauty of the structure. There were to be two entrances, one from the south which would come in on the tower and one from the north which would come in on the opening of the circle segment.⁶⁷ Each of these entrances were to have ornamented gates.⁶⁸

By May of 1928, the Building Committee had opened the bids, selected the contractors, and had the surveyors stake out the site.⁶⁹ (Note: For a listing of contractors that worked on the Seminary building project see WELS Proceedings of 1929, p. 32 and "Seminary Building Costs - February 19, 1930" located in the archives of WLS) By June of the year the footings on the Seminary buildings were dug and the steam shovels were moving on to the professors' houses. Two of the footings had already been poured and the masons were working on the dorm footings.⁷⁰ Work was well on the way, but there was one thing missing, there needed to be a cornerstone laying

On July 22, 1928, the cornerstone was laid at the Seminary at Mequon. The seats that had been set up for 4,000 expected guests were filled by an estimated 5,000 - 7,000 people. Pastor John Plocher, the 1st Vice-President of the Minnesota District, was to preach the German address, but he was unable to attend, so A. C. Hasse, Secretary of the Synod, gave the German address instead. August Zich, President of the Northern Wisconsin District, gave the English address. The cornerstone itself was laid by the President of the Synod, Gustav Bergemann, with the help of Pastor H. Knuth, Chairman of the Seminary Board.⁷¹

On one side the cornerstone had inscribed, "Seminarium Theologicum 1928 Lutheran Theological Seminary", and on the other, "Sola Gratia Sola Scriptura Sola Fide".

The contents of the new cornerstone were:

- ▶ a copy of the Gemeindeblatt
- ▶ a copy of the Northwestern Lutheran
- ▶ a copy of the Kinderfreude
- ▶ a copy of the Junior Northwestern
- ▶ a copy of the Northwestern Lutheran Annual
- ▶ a copy of the "Seminary Catalog"
- ▶ a copy of the latest "Parochialbericht" - a brief copy of the Seminary building project
- ▶ an English and German daily newspaper
- ▶ a copy of the program of the day
- ▶ a copy of Hoenecke's Dogmatics
- ▶ a copy of Schaller's Pastorale
- ▶ a copy of Pieper's Jesaias
- ▶ a copy of Koehler's Geschichte der Wisconsin Synode⁷²

The old cornerstone from the Seminary in Wauwatosa was moved to the new Seminary as well. The contents of the old cornerstone were somewhat damaged by water, so the contents were refurbished and the old cornerstone soldered shut to prevent any future water damage. The cornerstone itself was placed in the wall of the tower.

Once the ceremonies of the cornerstone laying were over, it was back to work on the construction. The mason started working on the dorm, going unit-by-unit, moving around the circle segment which would end with the chapel. The plan of attack was for the masons to build the walls

unit-by-unit with the carpenters following behind them building the roof for each unit. In this way, the buildings would be safe from inclement weather.⁷³ Buildings were not the only concern of the Building Committee. There was also the matter of landscaping. At the north entrance to the property there was a section of land that had always been boggy due to a creek that ran through the property. In order to add to the beauty of the Seminary, it was decided that, that this section of land should be tiled and a lagoon formed for the creek to flow into. There was also the matter of the road on the property. The previous lanes that ran through the property needed to be graded and widened to meet the future needs of the Seminary traffic. As for the natural landscape of the property, there was not much that could be done at this time due to the incomplete construction.⁷⁴

1929

By January of 1929, the concrete and plastering of the dorms and the administrative building were complete, and the workers were currently concentrating on the library building. The residences of the professors were well on their way to completion with the exception of the slate roofs. Construction was no longer the top priority. Plans were now focusing on the furnishing of the new Seminary. Chairman Brenner expressed his optimism when he related the fact that there were hopes to move into the new Seminary in April.⁷⁵ It was the feeling of the Building Committee that the dorms and the kitchen should be newly furnished.⁷⁶ This meant that desks, chairs, drapes, linoleum, mirrors, beds, sheets, pillowslips, towels, and quilts were needed. In order to come up with these additional items, chairman Brenner encouraged the ladies of the Synod to send in some of the needed items.⁷⁷

Most of this year was spent putting on the finishing touches. With completion close at hand, there were many in the Synod who wanted to get first-hand looks at the grand Seminary project. Students were reportedly giving tours of the buildings to the interested spectators.⁷⁸ In order to give

all of the members of the Synod a good look at the new Seminary, there were articles with pictures published in the Northwestern Lutheran during July and August, as well as a sixteen page booklet produced that showed the Seminary that was to be distributed to the entire Synod.⁷⁹

In the August 4, 1929 edition of the Northwestern Lutheran, there ran an announcement for the dedication of the Seminary to be held on August 18, 1929, with services both in the morning and in the afternoon. It encouraged those who were planning to attend to drop the regular Sunday morning worship and to come instead to Thiensville for the dedication services. There was one word of warning though: if you wanted to eat, you had to bring your own lunch.⁸⁰

On August 18, 1928, the Seminary at Mequon was dedicated. Approximately 15,000 members of the Synod attended, which was a few thousand more than the number of seats that had been set up. The weather was perfect. In the morning service, the President of the Synod, Gustav Bergemann, preached the German address on Romans 3:28, and pastor John Glaeser preached the English address on Jeremiah 23:6. In the afternoon service, Pastor John Witt preached the German address on I Corinthians 1:30, and Pastor Edward Birkholz preached the English address on John 5:39. In connection with the services there was a 500 voice choir that sang. This was one of the biggest gatherings in Synod history. After the services were complete, there were thousands who remained to tour the buildings which were left open for the remainder of the day.⁸¹

The building project had reached its completion. At least, the building portion of the project was done. There was still the matter of paying for the project. By September of 1929, only \$586,639.37 of a needed \$750,000 had been collected.⁸² But the money for the Seminary was on hand as the school was dedicated. On May 27, 1930, the Seminary Building account was closed. Yet part of the agreement that the Building Committee had taken upon itself was to raise the necessary funds for the Synod's debt and the New Ulm projects as well. Thus the work of the committee went

on for a number of years after the Seminary was in use and paid for. ⁸³

Conclusion

When looking at the Seminary in 1996, one can still see much of the original design and structure, which shows the thoughtfulness that was taken when the original plans were made. The improvements that have been made over the years have not made any part of the plant unusable. The plans were made in such a way that changes could be made as needs required. This is especially true when considering the dorm unit editions, the library, and the altering of the old gym. With the small exception of the color of the brick and different window styles, it is difficult to distinguish the new from the old.

Upon reflection of the building project itself, I marvel at the financial aspects of the project - the amount of money, the way in which it was to be collected, the stewardship that was patiently preached repeatedly, and the way that the Lord blessed the Synod so that such an undertaking could be achieved. After playing with the numbers and considering the investments that were made, I estimate that there was \$215,368.77 taken in by the Synod by 1931, apart from the offerings of the Synod which could be applied to the collection. That is quite a gift with which the Lord blessed us which now provides many blessings to the Synod each year.

The Money Situation

Old Debt

Debt of Synod with current building expenses	\$210,841.61	***
Van Dyke property	\$35,000.00	***
Bues farm	\$25,000.00	***
Church Extension Fund	\$18,666.44	***
total	\$289,508.05	***

Cost of the Seminary

Land and Land Improvements	\$53,659.17	*
Buildings and Attached Fixtures	\$315,882.61	*
Machinery and Equipment	\$11,902.74	*
Furniture and Fixtures	\$6,565.66	*
	\$388,010.18	*

Money received by the Synod

<i>Sale of the Van Dyke Property</i>		
portion received 5/30/30	\$4,327.82	*
portion received 6/30/29	\$27,900.00	*
portion received 7/31/30	\$3,000.00	*
portion received 11/21/30	\$2,000.00	*
portion received 12/31/30	\$6,000.00	*
portion received 4/28/31	\$33,000.00	*
portion used to purchase Mequon Property	\$25,272.18	*
portion to be paid as of June of 1931	\$6,000.00	*
	\$107,500.00	*
<i>Sale of Old Seminary Site</i>		
Synod's share of the Pabst estate	\$27,500.00	*
Sale of one Professor's house	\$7,500.00	*
	\$35,000.00	*
<i>Sale of Bues farm</i>		
	\$45,000.00	**
<i>Dividends on Investments</i>		
	\$27,868.77	*
Total received by the Synod		\$215,368.77

Money Applied to Seminary Project

Dividends on Investments	\$27,868.77
portion used to purchase Mequon Property	\$25,272.18
	\$53,140.95

Money applied to the Debt

	\$162,227.82
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Actual Collection Money Needed for Seminary	\$334,869.23
Actual Collection Money Needed for Synod's Debt	\$127,280.23
Actual Total Collection Needed	\$462,149.46

* Figures taken from the 1931 Synod Proceedings, p. 107-108

** Figures taken from the 1929 Synod Proceedings, p.29

*** Figures taken from Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 10, p.275

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4. Koehler, *Faith Life* Vol. 52, No.2, p. 10
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21. Koehler, *Faith Life* Vol. 52, No.2, p. 12
22. Holst and Leiser "letter to J.P. Koehler", *Concordia Historical Institute*, Sup. 1, #1418
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30. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol.16, No. 15, p. 229
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39. *Northwestern Lutheran* Vol. 10, No. 18, p. 275
40. *Northwestern Lutheran* Vol. 10, No. 18. , p. 275
41. *Northwestern Lutheran* Vol. 10, No. 18. , p.275
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