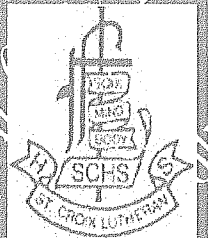




Impressions of SCLHS:

The Founding Principles and Facts of St. Croix Lutheran High School

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Foreword

To write a complete and detailed history of St. Croix Lutheran High School is no small undertaking. This paper was begun as such a project, then narrowed to one that would cover twenty-five years, then ten, and then revolved around one eventful year in the life of the school. Morton Schroeder has already written a ten-year history of the school, an excellent source for a Seminarian who wishes to pick up where this writer has left off. Lord willing, someone can and will desire to do so.

Outline

Thesis: A look at events and people involved in the founding of St. Croix Lutheran High School of West St. Paul, MN demonstrates that the school was founded on sound Lutheran educational principles.

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IMPRESSIONS OF SCLHS:

The Founding Principles and Facts of St. Croix Lutheran High School

Old Principles

The first impression that many people in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area have of St. Croix Lutheran High School is often verbalized, “Isn’t that the old Brady High School?” They are of course, recalling that St. Croix Lutheran High School now inhabits the high school facilities at 1200 Oakdale in West St. Paul MN. Until June of 1991, this was the address of Archbishop Brady High School. Now all that remains of the Roman Catholic educational institution is a shell. Today the people working at learning and the teaching now transpiring on the grounds where nuns and priest once taught and where uniformed students once lined the halls have their roots in Lutheranism.

September 9, 1958 was the official first day of classes for the first Lutheran high school of its kind in Minnesota.¹ One could say that this was St. Croix’s birthday. Yet those involved closely with the school would argue that its conception can be traced all the way back to Luther himself. Luther’s thoughts on education were so important to the people of the Twin Cities area that they chose to celebrate the 450th Anniversary of the reformation in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of their high school. “Martin Luther played no small role in the education policies of the church that bears his name and that the establishment of parish schools in the

¹Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm and Concordia Academy had were in full operation at the time. However, as is implicit in both of their names, these institutions existed with two differences: 1) the purpose of preparing students for ministerial education. St. Croix offered only a more general pre-college curriculum. and 2) the practice of boarding students. St. Croix students were responsible for their own transportation between home and school each day.

church stems largely from the treatises he produced on the subject of Christian Education,”² writes Rev. E. A. Knief. Ten years after St. Croix opened its doors in 1958, its people attributed the founding of its principles to the years just following 1517:

The first of Luther’s principles concerning Christian education which influenced the founders of SCLHS is this: In spite of the attitude of enemies, it is important to establish a Christian home. Psalms 127, 128 and Ephesians 6:4 provide ample credence to this idea, but in the case of SCLHS, principle is taken more from Luther’s example than anything else. Harold Johne, Pastor at Emanuel Ev. Lutheran Church in 1968 writes, “In spite of the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church toward marriage, in spite of the malicious gossip of their enemies, this former monk and nun [Martin and Katherine Luther] established a Christian home. Their family life was such that it continues to proclaim the blessedness of Christian marriage to us today.”³

As far as Luther’s writings are concerned, the teachers and parents of SCLHS looked to “two of the most significant, most copied products of Luther’s career: the Large and Small Catechism. They are surely representative of Luther’s personal efforts in religious education.”⁴ The question and answer method used in the Small Catechism and the “teachers handbook” format of the Large Catechism show us that Luther’s advice concerning religious education had obvious general educational overtones. Luther not only set forth plainly what should be taught in religious training but he also showed Christians how to teach it in an effective way.

²Knief, Rev. E. A. “Roots of Lutheran Education in the Twin Cities.” (Hereafter cited, “Knief, ‘Roots’”) *God’s Grace: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: The Tenth Anniversary Publication of St. Croix Lutheran High School*. Hereafter cited as “*God’s Grace, YTT*” (May, 1968): 14.

³Johne, Rev. Harold J. “Luther-the Family Man” *God’s Grace: YTT*: 4-6.

⁴Johnson, Rev. Iver C. “Luther on Education” *God’s Grace: YTT*: 7-10

Also cited as important works of Martin Luther concerning the religious training of children were his 1524 treatise “To the Mayors and Aldermen of All the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools,” and his 1530 address to pastoral colleagues “Sermon on the Duty of Sending Children to School.” These letters placed educational responsibilities on more than just the immediate family. Everyone from lay-leaders to princes could help to improve education in 16th century Germany. Then, as education advanced, so would the teaching of religion.

Specifically applied to SCLHS, we see the shared responsibility principle of Martin Luther put into practice in the organization of the Twin Cities Lutheran High School Association. St. Croix is dependent on the support (prayers, encouragement, students and offerings, etc...) of area congregations, not just tuition paid by the parents of students at the school. In the treatises mentioned above, Luther also encourages what one might call “well-roundedness” as a goal for young Christian trainees. This meant work in the languages, in gymnastics, and of course, in music. The present school motto “Saint Croix Lutheran High School: Educating Soul, Mind, and Body,” alludes to Luther’s influence on the school’s founding fathers.



Of the three areas of education which the school motto mentions, the soul is of course, most vital. In fact, LeDell Plath, in his essay for the 1968 SCLHS Parent / Teacher Association entitled “What’s Lutheran in Education” tells readers how to carry out that care for the soul.

“This education shows a child his need for a Savior by showing him his utter sinful condition, and that because of this sinful condition there is no hope for eternal life... Then comes the comforting message of the Gospel with its good news of the Savior, the Savior who through his humble birth, His sinless life, and His conquering of the forces of sin, death, and the devil has given hope to each of our students.”⁵

⁵Plath, Rev. LeDell. “What’s Lutheran in Education” *God’s Grace: YTT*: 12

Pastor Allen Zenker cites John 20:31 as the purpose of Lutheran education⁶: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Once this foundation has been laid, then students will become future good leaders in our congregations, he contends. Some will even be guided into full-time (public) work in the church. The words “Lutheran” and “education” advance hand in hand. Simply put, “When we Twin Cities parents teach God’s Word to our children, that’s Lutheran Education,”⁷ The basic needs of the souls of high school age students in the Twin Cities for Law and Gospel before all else directed the adults in the Twin Cities Area to establish SCLHS.

This basic need for the message of salvation prompted Lutheran education to sprout in the St. Paul region. Trinity Lutheran Church of St. Paul played a significant role in the development of educational thinking in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area. On September 14, 1855 Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, shepherded by Pastor Wier, adopted articles of incorporation. However, in November of 1857, when J. C. F. “Father” Heyer stepped off the Mississippi river boat and on to the shore of St. Paul, he found no trace of the congregation. The financial panic of the same year had wiped it out. Even the thirty-two souls that he eventually managed to gather each week to hear him preach left him somewhat frustrated at first. The English Lutheran pastor had “no more than two or three members who would prefer English to German.”⁸

Initially, the people who would eventually take on the name “Trinity Ev. Lutheran

⁶Zenker, Rev. Allen. “Lutheran Education in the Twin Cities Today.” *God’s Grace: YTT*: 19.

⁷*Ibid.* 18

⁸Bachmann, Theodore E. *They Called Him Father: The life Story of John Christian Frederick Heyer*. The Muhlenberg Press, 1942.

Church” in St. Paul met at a new public school building. When evicted from there, they met in a dance hall until they could erect a building at the corner of Tenth Avenue and Wabasha Street. Even in its early years, Trinity showed its dedication to Christian education. Just one year after the sixty-five year old Father Heyer established the congregation, they were operating a Christian Day School with an approximate enrollment of fifty students.

Trinity Lutheran Church, now located on Rice Street, just a block or so from the state capitol grounds⁹, is significant to the history of St. Croix Lutheran for another reason, namely, it’s daughter congregations. Father Heyer, a veteran missionary who made multiple trips India, naturally instilled a mission spirit into his flock. He installed G. Fachtman to take his place. Under Fachtman, the first specially trained teacher taught at the school. The new pastors’s unionism, however, caused a split in the congregation which led to the formation of Zion Lutheran Church, now of the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod.

Factman was replaced by J. H. Sieker, “a tower of Lutheran doctrine and practice.”¹⁰ During Sieker’s service at Trinity, St. John’s Lutheran Church, up the hill about two miles to the east of Trinity spun off of Heyer’s original congregation in 1871. By 1901, one hundred and ninety-eight students enrolled at St. John’s school under the guidance of three teachers.

Some of Father Heyer’s original German members came from an area south of Trinity, then called “Riverview,” the modern West St. Paul. In order to attend services, they needed to

⁹Because of financial hardships, the building which Trinity used for both school and church was never actually completed until after the Civil War. In 1947, the property of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church was bought by the State of Minnesota. The land on which the church was located is now part of the approach area to the State Capitol Building.

¹⁰Knief, “Roots.” *God’s Grace: YTT*: 15

cross a toll bridge. This naturally discouraged attendance. Pastor Seiker consequently decided to cross the bridge himself every other week in order to conduct services in a small schoolhouse. This led to the founding of Emanuel Lutheran Church in 1873. In 1958, the year SCLHS was founded, Emanuel posted the largest communicant membership of any of the Twin Cities churches (approximately 1,500) and provided the largest number of students to the original "Pioneer" class (six). The history of Lutheran education in the Twin Cities stressed the importance of Christian education in the minds of Minnesotans long before SCLHS was formed.

The New School

The first thing that impresses a person about the founding of St. Croix Lutheran High School is the speed with which it was done. Morton Schroeder, her first principal, writes "But vision will have its day. When the time came for the new Lutheran high school, it came with startling rapidity, with surprising urgency."¹¹ The first recorded mention of beginning a Lutheran high school in the Twin Cities Area is said to be recorded in the January 15, 1957 minutes of the St. Croix Pastors Conference.¹² Classes began in September of the following year. At that January meeting, pastors G. J. Ehlert, Martin P. Janke and Willard Kehrberg formed the "school committee." Chairing the committee was George Baer, then pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church of West St. Paul. At the time of this writing, he resides in Watertown, WI as "Professor Emeritus Baer" of Northwestern Preparatory School.

¹¹Schroeder, Morton "A Remembrance of Things Past: An Informal History of Saint Croix Lutheran High School." *God's Grace: YTT*; 26.

¹²*Ibid.* 26

Professor Baer also comments, "It took off rather quickly... St. Croix was probably the exception, it's steps came so quickly."¹³ Once the committee was enlarged to form the "Lutheran High School Committee of the St. Croix Conference," a.k.a. "the steering committee," some serious work began. They conducted surveys, began publishing publicity material, and brainstormed on ways to raise funds. They held no less than fourteen meetings between September 9, 1957 and April 8, 1958. "The most difficult thing was finding time to attend meetings, sometimes 'til one in the morning..." Professor Baer recalled, "but I didn't mind it. It was exciting."

Indeed, this was an exciting time, but not just for the pastors investigating the possibility of a high school that would pick up where their children's Christian Day School had left off. Once January 20, 1958 passed, the group had the formal endorsement of the area Lutheran high school movement. At this point, the main task of the area Lutheran high school movement was not so much planning as it was publicity. They had to stimulate public interest. Three mass meetings/ open forums were held for this very purpose. Pastors and laymen alike addressed crowds that had gathered at a few of the larger WELS churches in the area. Outside speakers with experience in similar situations also spoke in a helpful way: "Pastor Warneke was the principal at Fox Valley Lutheran High School. He was one of the speakers at one of those mass-meetings. He was encouraging too, as I remember," says Professor Baer.

The need for publicity also brought a layman by the name of Delmar Knispel to great importance in the history of SCLHS. Mr. Knispel was actually known to more people by the

¹³Baer, Mr. & Mrs George. Personal interview, March 4, 1999. All subsequent quotes by Professor or Mrs. Baer taken from the same.

name “Del Franklin” than his given name. This member of Bloomington Ev. Lutheran Church was the program director at a local television station, KSTP-TV. Professor Bear says of Mr. Knispel, “He could call on people to draw up a brochure or something like that. They could produce it there. It was fun. It really helped to have him on the Board, too.” He used his position at his television station to produce not flyers, but quality brochures encouraging parents and students to consider an area Lutheran high school for secondary education and to encourage others to give to the cause (Appendix). His service on the steering committee was respected and recognized with such high regard that he was elected as the first chairman of St. Croix’s first Board of Regents.

Ever since June 16, 1958 the Board of Regents has represented the WELS congregations known as the Twin Cities Lutheran High School Association (TSLHSA), which was formed one week earlier. It’s charter members are listed with their 1958 locations:¹⁴

Bloomington Lutheran Church, Blomington, MN	St. John’s Lutheran Church, Hastings
Christ Ev. Lutheran Church, North St. Paul	St. John’s Lutheran Church, St. Paul
Emanuel Lutheran Church, Saint Paul	St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Prescott, WI
Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Minneapolis	Salem Lutheran Church, Stillwater, MN
St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church, St. Paul Park	Timothy Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park
St. James Lutheran Church, West St. Paul	Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Paul

With only three months left until the first day of school, the institution lacked a couple of important items: teachers, facilities, and students. Yet before any of those would come, the

¹⁴*Praise to the Lord for Grace:25: The Twenty-fifth Annifersary Publication of Saint Croix Lutheran High School: June, 1983*

school needed a name. On July 8, the name “Twin City Lutheran High School” was voted down. Other names were suggested, but the good majority of the votes went to the name which the pastors’ conference and the regional WELS summer camp¹⁵ also bear— St. Croix Lutheran High School.¹⁶ With the name in place, the most frequently used publicity tool became the “St. Croix seal.” In return for monetary pledges to the high school project, people received stamps that carried the school’s emblem which they could use to seal their envelopes.(Appendix)

As far as the facilities were concerned, St. James offered its facilities “in case of emergency.”¹⁷ This is surprising at first glance, considering that the Board of Regents frequently met at Emanuel Lutheran Church and that the largest cluster of students from any one church to attend the new school came from Emanuel. However, as Mrs. Baer explains, “St. James had room. Emanuel would have taken on the high school if they had had the room. We had already set up classrooms in the basement.” Not until the following summer would Emanuel contribute to the facilities of SCLHS, when they donated thirteen acres of land for the express purpose of having the permanent site of the high school constructed on the corner of Stryker and Crusader Avenues.¹⁸ Interestingly enough, one of the first sites considered was the property at the corner of Thompson and Oakdale Avenues in West St. Paul, just a few blocks south of the former Archbishop Brady High School, the present location of SCLHS A public park now lies there.

¹⁵“Camp Croix” in Danbury, WI.

¹⁶Minutes of the General Board, Twin Cities Lutheran High School Association. July 8, 1958: page 2.

¹⁷Minutes, Building and Site Committee. March 21, 1958

¹⁸Letter from the Building and Site Committee to the Board of Regents, November 20, 1958.

As far as staffing their new school, the Board needed to act with expediency, to say the least. After synodical advice against the plan to use two vicars to teach the student body consisting of all ninth graders, a divine call was issued to Mr. Morton Schroeder of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Winona, MN on July 22. By August 7, Mr. Schroeder was meeting with the Board of Regents "pertaining to the acceptance of his call and his desire to do the Lord's work in our midst."¹⁹ In that same meeting, two other teachers, Pastor Donald Kolander and Mrs. Carl Bolle. were asked for their consent to teach along side Mr. Schroeder. They gave it.

On September 9, the three new teachers waited in the renovated basement of St. James Lutheran Church as twenty-two freshmen, nick-named "The Pioneers," Marilyn Knief, Susan Schroeder, Earl Longendyke, James Mueller, Arnold Doehling, Myron Ashley, Jr., Lawrence Kelly, Diane Karp, Karrol Kinder, Sharon Entwistle, Ernest Strehlow, Lois Pearson, Lynda Peterson, Mary Reuter, Donald Huberty, John Andert, Charlotte Engel, Terrance Young, Dennis Wagner, Carolyn Hawes, Richard Springstroh, and Mary Jean Smith (listed in order of enrollment) tip-toed through the doors for their first day of high school. They were joined by parents, pastors, teachers and friends as the day, the year, the school began with a service in which Pastor Alvin Barry preached on Matt 19:14 "Let the little children to come to me." In just eighty-five days, the Board of Regents had completed their task of beginning a high school.

Mr. Schroeder, in his ten-year history of SCLHS puts the day into perspective:

The world was little impressed with the events at Chreokee and Annapolis [the location of St. James Lutheran Church]. Nor, for that matter, were the local newspapers. The St. Paul Pioneer Press that morning carried the following headline: "U.S. Firm in Faith of

¹⁹Minutes, Twin City Lutheran High School Association, Board of Regents. August 7, 1958.

Khrushchiv Warning to Quit Formosa Area.” Khrushcev has long since fallen into disfavor. Saint Croix continues *to preach Christ and him crucified.*²⁰ (Emphasis added.)

St. Croix Lutheran High School was the blessed result of many years of developing Lutheran Education in the Twin Cities.

The New Students

The first thing that impresses a person when speaking with a student from St. Croix’s first years is the willingness with which they attended the new school. Two members of the the class of 1963, the second class to graduate from SCLHS, provide interesting insight concerning student life. Jeff Binder comments, “I wasn't really encouraged to attend St. Croix, but my choice was supported by my parents.”²¹ His classmate, Ron Brutlag, sings a slightly different tune about being encouraged to attend the budding school in the first place. He lists his pastor, grade school principle, parents and classmates as people who influenced his choice of high schools. However, his attitude about his high school experience is identical: “I always felt good about going to school each day.”²² Students were motivated to attend SCLHS in a number of ways. But once 8:45 rolled around each morning, of course, their school had one simple purpose: “The purpose of St. Croix Lutheran High School is to offer a sound Christian education to the

²⁰Schroeder, Morton “A Remembrance of Things Past: An Informal History of Saint Croix Lutheran High School.” *God’s Grace: YTT*: 31.

²¹Binder, Mr. Jeffery. Personal interview. April 4, 1999. All subsequent quotes by Mr. Binder taken from the same.

²²Brutlag, Mr. Ronald. Electronic mail interview. March 31, 1999. All subsequent quotes by Mr. Brutlag taken from the same.

students of high school age.”²³

What would students receive as part of their “sound Christian education?” The course of study was challenging. Faithful to Luther’s advice to produce well-rounded students, it required Latin or citizenship, English, algebra, general science, and physical education courses of all the students. Music and drawing were electives. The unique aspect of this curriculum format was the church history course. This idea of Mr. Schroeder’s was his way of teaching His-story to the students while filling the need for both a world history class and the desired religious training into one period during the class day. Mr. Schroeder used his gifts as an energetic instructor to teach everything during that first year, with the exception of a couple classes. Pastor Donald Kolander would come in from 9:50 until lunchtime each day to teach Latin and Algebra. Mrs. Bolle handled the music.

Not that you could make everyone happy. The February, 1960 *Courier reports: Mr. Earl Longendyke*, [a sophomore at the time] chairman of the anti-education association, suggest that classes should be five minutes long and the time to pass from class to class should be fifty minutes long.”²⁴ “There’s one in every class,” held true even in the case of infant SCLHS.

“The curriculum was strictly pre-college when you look at it,” says Professor Baer. Mr. Jeff Binder, for instance, attended Naval War College in Virginia following his graduation. Mr. Brutlag tells us that “An emergency teacher named James Fenske inspired me to go into full time church work.” Brutlag teaches in Livonia, MI today. SCLHS was not, however, pre-

²³“Information for Northwestern Lutheran Annal, 1959 given to the Board of Regents by Morton Schroeder. August 27, 1958.

²⁴*Courier*. (January/February, 1960): Volume 1, No. 2, page 5.

ministerial as its contemporaries in the area strove to be:

SCLHS does not specifically aim to prepare students for enrolling in our teacher and pastor training schools. SCLHS will do its utmost to get all students, including those who are less gifted intellectually, through the High School Program. SCLHS does however have one very basic requirement, namely, that each student apply himself and make the best possible use of whatever gifts the Lord has seen fit to bestow upon him.²⁵

Attending St. Croix in its infant years presented other challenges to a student. The class of 1963, for instance, was less celebrated than the "Pioneer" class of 1962. Thirty-two freshmen enrolled for the school's second academic year. Sixteen of them graduated from St. Croix.

Attending St. Croix took a kind of commitment that not all young students possess.

For one thing, they did not have attractive facilities. Even after the permanent site on Crusader Avenue was finished in February of 1960²⁶, the student body quickly out-grew the five classroom facility because they were adding one grade each year without losing any students to graduation until 1963. They made due until the facility could be expanded by holding classes in "the Temp," a temporary barracks-type structure attached to side of the school building. "I can remember trouble keeping the doors shut in the Minnesota winter was sometimes a problem," recalls Mr. Binder. "Someone coming in during class had the potential of altering the entire curriculum for the day."

Attitude went a long way in fixing the lack-of-classroom-space problem. Mr Brutlag says, "I started in the basement of St. James Church in West St. Paul. That wasn't too much like high school. But when we moved to the "temp" it was much better but still too small. Buildings

²⁵Minutes of the Board of Regents, Twin City Lutheran High School Association. September 27, 1962.

²⁶After a mud-soaked ground-breaking of May, 1959, a steel strike prevented construction from completion at an earlier date.

weren't really an issue for me. Classmates and classes and the fun we had were the major factors for me.”

SCLHS did not offer the variety of extra-curricular activities that larger schools offered. Beginning in winter of 1959, Pastor Kolander coached the basketball team in a cement-floored armory. Again, attitude was everything in this situation “The team wasn't too good but we always looked forward to the party that would follow,” Mr. Brutlag remembered.

Transportation was also an issue. “I told my parents I wanted to go to St. Croix, so we had to buy a car,” Mr. Binder recalls. Some students had to take a bus from as far away as fifteen or thirty miles each morning to get to school.

The sinful nature is strong in high-school age students. In 1959 we sadly note that the school's first major disciplinary action had to be taken. An incident involving students and alcohol left four boys with a four-day suspension, removal from the baseball team, loss of car privileges and the expulsion of a schoolmate.

In spite of challenges, you still hear students from those days say, “I received a very good education at SCLHS even though it was small. I really wouldn't trade it for another school.” Why not? The *Courier*, St. Croix's student school-newspaper, let the students answer that question: “I wanted an education with a religious slant to it,”²⁷ sophomore Emmons Connel told the 1962 *Courier* reporter. The first issue of the *Courier* printed this short excerpt from a student pen:

Why do students drive fifteen to thirty miles to attend a Lutheran High school? Why don't they, for convenience's sake, go to the public high school near at hand? This problem is simply answered. A Christian boy or girl realizes of himself that God wants him to use his talents to constantly study His Word. God gave us the command, “Search the Scriptures,” to all people. For this reason, Christian students are willing to attend a

²⁷*The Courier*, (December, 1959): Vol. 3, No.5, page 5.

Lutheran high school. And for this reason, Christian parents are willing to go out of their way to send their teen-agers many miles to [_ _ _ in?] for them an education in the Lord. L.C.²⁸

Where Christians gather around God's Word, fellowship between those people naturally follows. This was also the case with the "family" of St. Croix, especially in it years right after its founding. Even when school let out, the students and teachers continued to spend time together. "I remember the games and the get-togethers we had. Hay rides, parties, inter-mural sporting events, and a lot of camaraderie between the students," says Mr. Binder.

Camaraderie also existed between the sum of St. Croix students and the association which brought the school into existence. Student publications such as the *Courier* and the *Shield*, the school annual, made information about the school available to more people than just those who were closely tied to the school. Mr. Schroeder also published a Principal's Newsletter. On December 10, 1958, the following letter went out to the pastor of each Twin Cities congregation, not just those who belonged to the TCLHSA:

Dear pastor,

Will you please announce the following to your congregation(s) in fashion most convenient to you:

The first annual "Christmas at ^{Saint} Croix Lutheran" program will be presented on Thursday, December 18, at 8:00 in the evening, in the basement of St. James Lutheran Church.

A social hour will follow the program. Held in the fireside room of St. James Church, it will give the members, friends, parents and teaches an opportunity to become acquainted with each other.

Cordially yours,
Morton A. Schroeder, Principal²⁹

²⁸"What Saint Croix Does Mean to Us," *The Courier*, December, 1959. Vol.1, No.1 page 7.

²⁹Schroeder, Morton Letter to the TSLHA, December 10, 1958.

The St. Croix Christmas concert has been a gathering point on the calendar of Twin Cities Wisconsin Synod members and friends on a yearly basis ever since. St. Croix students were blessed with a close bond to each other and to the Christians in their area in a special way because of their school.

Mr. Jack Oldfield, who has taught at St. Croix longer than any other teacher in faculty history, comments on the biggest difference between the St. Croix of today and the school at which he began teaching in 1963: "What's different is that we are no longer a tightly-knit family. We still say we are- and, to a certain extent, we are- but increasing size has brought diversity."³⁰ However, he goes on, one thing hasn't changed and, Lord willing, never will. "The most important similarity [between SCLHS in 1963 and SCLHS in 1999] is that the school still has a solid Scriptural base. This is evident from the guidance of the Board of Regents, through the parental support we receive, through our insistence on chapel every day,³¹ thru the attitudes and practices of our teachers- and, for sure, through the attitudes and behaviors of our students." God did indeed bless the students of SCLHS with a foundation of Christian education in the Twin Cities Area of Minnesota when their was established.

The New Principal

The first thing that impressed people about Morton Schroeder is difficult to pinpoint. Pictures that show him wearing bow-tie, horn-rimmed glasses with the wire under-frame and flat-top call to mind different memories- both positive and negative. One teacher who served on

³⁰Oldfield, Mr. John. Mail interview. March 3, 1999. Subsequent quotes by Mr. Oldfield taken from the same.

³¹Chapel was already the central part of each school by the time Mr. Oldfield joined the faculty. Ref. *The Courier*, December, 1961. Vol. 3, No. 3, page 3.

his faculty will say that working with him “was like hitting the jackpot.”³² Another will mention frequent clashes with him. Some students remember mostly conflict with him. Others remember his sense of humor. Perhaps it is best to say that Morton Schroeder is remembered for both his left foot and his right foot that walked that thin line between being a person and being an authority. The following details are not meant to be a complete biography of the man (not available for comment at the time of this writing),

Morton was born to Mr. and Mrs. Carl Schroeder of Bay City, MI where he grew up. After graduation from Michigan Lutheran Seminary, he received his educational qualifications from Dr. Martin Luther College and Concordia teachers’ college of River Forrest, IL. After receiving his B. Sc. in Education, he did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin and University of Minnesota.

The TSLHSA must have known they were getting a capable man when Schroeder accepted the call to St. Croix on August 7, 1958. His teaching career included positions as principal of Madison Lutheran School, Madison, WI; St. Paul’s Lutheran School, New Ulm, MN, and St. Matthew’s Lutheran School in Winona, MN. He moved to the St. Paul area in the summer of 1958 with his wife, Bettie, and four children: Susan, Marc, Sarah, and Robin. At that time ^{the} Wisconsin Synod had already begun to tap into his talents as a writer. He had contributed to three of it’s educational publications and also presented at numerous teachers conference, both of which he continued to do during his tenure in the Twin Cities.

Morton Schroeder’s nickname was “Salty,” (a play on his first name and Morton Salt

³²Arndt, Miss Rhoda. Mail interview. March 14, 1999. Subsequent quotes by Miss Ardnt taken from the same.

Company of Chicago). “In a way, that characterized his personality,” comments Professor Baer. He also had this to say about the man’s personality: “He wasn’t a big person. He didn’t like a whole lot of wisecracks about his height... even if he had a temper, he didn’t blow his stack loudly when he disagreed... I thought Schroeder was very gifted. Probably just the kind of person we needed to start,” says Professor Baer. The man was far from perfect. Yet he was the perfect man for the job of St. Croix’s first principal.

His actions reflect that he was the right man for the task from the start. For one thing, God’s gift of uncommon zeal and enthusiasm prompted Mr. Schroeder to accept the call to SCLHS no more than two weeks after receiving it. He was needed to to teach and perform administrative duties, (aside from his earlier mentioned synodical writing projects). He ably performed the tasks of finalizing of SCLHS by-law~~s~~and constitution, guiding the Board of Regents policy, designing curriculum, encouraging parents, suppling insight to financial planning, giving input to plans for the permanent facilities that were in the works before he even arrived and recruiting students and association support, etc...

His dealings with the school administrative boards earned him much respect. In regard to his leadership, we look at his first official principal’s report and read of his foresight as a leader: “St. Croix Lutheran High School has been opened. The temptation to sit back and relax faces all of us. We must, however, guard against this. We must begin now to make plans for the immediate future...”³³

Another thing for which the Board of regents respected Mr. Schroeder was his ability as a

³³Schroeder, Morton. First General Report of the Principal to the General Board. September 23, 1958.

recruiter. He spent much of his tireless energy speaking to parents ^{and} students at churches throughout the Twin Cities. His policy for new teachers was used as a recruitment tool— he made sure that they all joined different churches throughout the Twin Cities so that as many congregations as possible had some sort of direct contact with SCLHS. In 1963, he created a pamphlet entitled “A Closer Look,” which 430 ninth and tenth graders throughout the Twin Cities WELS churches received. The Board of Regents would make special mention of this flyer as “an excellent piece of work.”³⁴

Professor Baer testifies to Schroeder’s faithfulness and ability: “He was very good in organizing and planning. You could tell that from some of the publicity material that he wrote. The presentations that he gave to the Board of Regents were *always* very organized.”

Schroeder’s colleagues also respected his organizational skills. More importantly than that, they recognized the love he had for the Word of God. Miss Rhoda Arndt, who joined St. Croix’s faculty after ten years called him “respected, well organized, articulate, and educationally sound. Best of all, following the Word of God was uppermost in his mind.”

Mr. John Oldfield, a former eighth grade student of Morton Schroeder joined the St. Croix faculty in 1963. He reflects the same sentiment: “My respect began building for him [in eighth grade]- and continued to build- and still does... One always understood (in spite of abrasiveness) that his stance was based on Scripture and sound professionalism.” Morton Schroeder left no doubt that he ^{under}stood his duty was to act in accordance with the principles upon which his school was founded. He was to faithfully reflect God’s Word to those around him as he taught his students He did.

³⁴Minutes, Board of Regents: April 25, 1963.

Those to whom he reported recognized his ability ^{along} with those he served as teacher. Aside from his intelligence and experience as an educator, Mr. Schoeder, who was going to spend all but two hours each class day with most students, would need to develop a rapport with them. The December 17 Board of Regents minutes indicate Mr. Schroeder's success in this area: "Individual members... expressed their appreciation for the for the interest the principal showed the students. They thanked him for the trouble he went to to create the feeling of oneness among the students."³⁵

Students themselves, from the first graduation class of SCLHS, provide their own insight: "We as a class, have known Mr. Schroeder in a way that no other class ever will... We can remember Mr. Schroeder for playing football in Cherokee park, writing our first Christmas program, and shouting above the clattering steam pipes in the St. James basement. In short, we have known Mr. Schroeder as a person, not only as an authority"³⁶

God provides his Church with the necessary gifts to carry on his work. In his dealings with the TCLHSA, with his colleagues and with his students, Mr. Morton Schroeder proved to be exactly the gifted man that St. Croix Lutheran high School needed him to be.

Conclusion

The first thing which impresses a person about the building whose cornerstone bears the inscription "ST. CROIX LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL 1959," is actually something apart from the "academic building" that housed SCLHS from 1960-1992. In front of "the old St. Croix building" sit two sandstone boulders; approximately waist high, six feet long by two feet deep.

³⁵Minutes, Board of Regents. December 17, 1958.

³⁶*Shield* 1962, Vol. 1, page 1.

“The rocks in front of the school symbolize the school’s one foundation: Jesus Christ.”³⁷

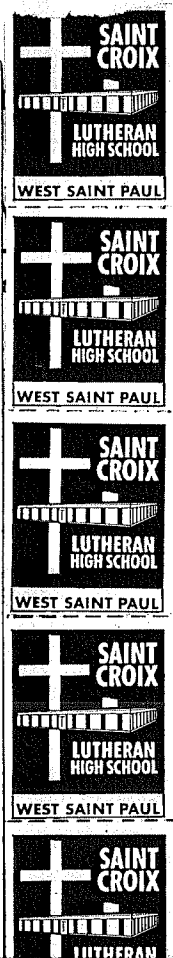
Although the organization has moved away from the site where the rocks still lay, their Rock stayed firmly under them. The students, faculty, and the people who began St. Croix Lutheran High School founded the institution standing firm on principles which originated with God himself, as shown to us in his Word. “I still have an abiding love for dealing with young people and watching them extend themselves and grow in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord and this right before my eyes,” says Mr. Oldfield, thirty five years after joining the St. Croix family. May they continue to do to God’s eternal glory.

³⁷*Praise to the Lord for Grace: 25: The Twenty-fifth Annifersary Publication of Saint Croix Lutheran High School: June, 1983*

Appendix

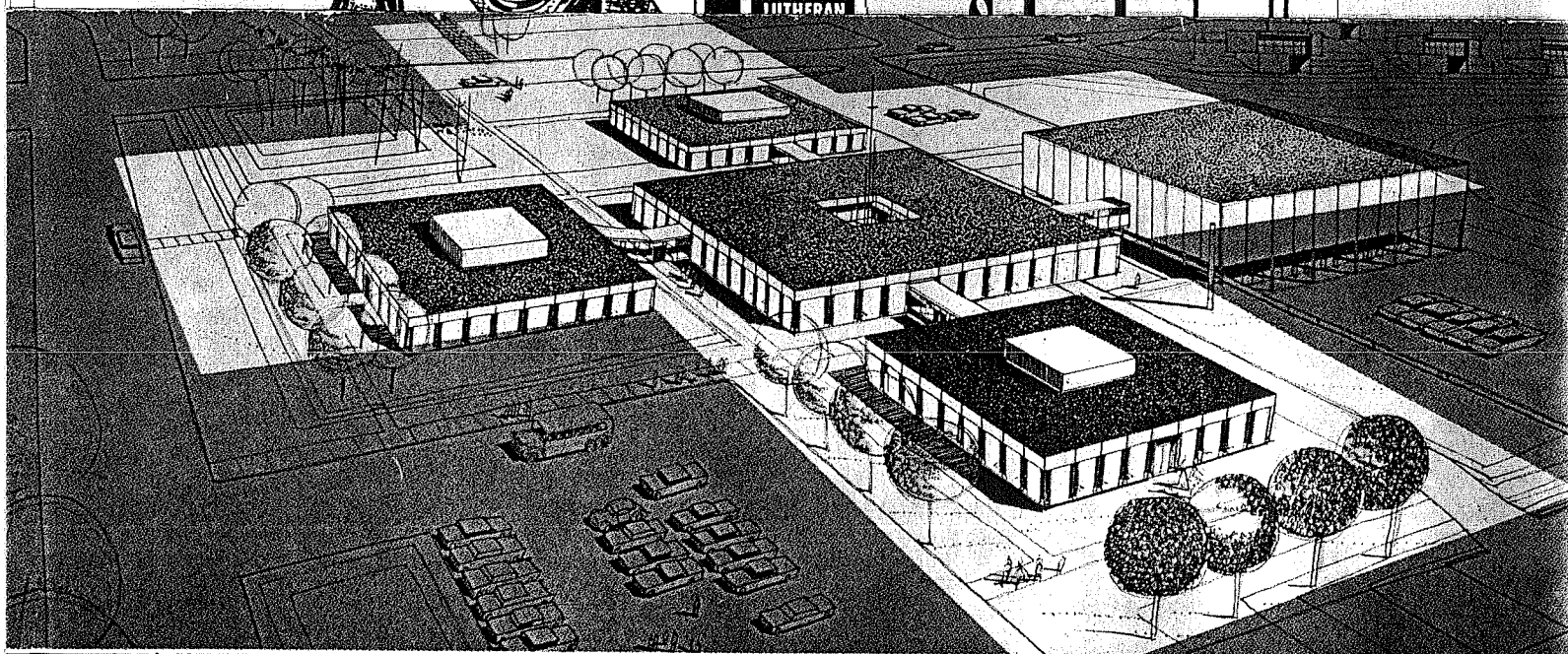
Photocopied promotion materials, including a string of "St. Croix seals" from the earliest days of St. Croix Lutheran High School.

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Lutheran
High

*"OPENS
the
DOOR"*



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