

‘SONGS OF THY TRIUMPH’

A SHORT HISTORY OF GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

by Steve Waldhauser '70

PART ONE: BEGINNINGS

(1862–1890)

In May of 1862, the congregation of Swedish Lutheran immigrants in Red Wing, Minn., appropriated 20 dollars so that their pastor, Eric Norelius, could equip their church for parochial school purposes. The other dozen congregations of the Minnesota Conference, part of the new Augustana Synod organized in 1860, were crying for trained pastors and teachers and, as Norelius was already influential among Swedish Lutherans in Minnesota, the conference now looked to him to instruct not only the children of his own congregation but also “older” students that other congregations might send to him. From that unlikely education experiment came Gustavus Adolphus College.

The first “older” student at Norelius’s school was Jonas Magny (formerly Magnuson), a 20-year-old from the Chisago Lake Swedish community who arrived in Red Wing in late September 1862, joined the Norelius household, and was in fact the only student throughout the fall. Five students from the Carver congregation arrived in December after Norelius sent word to fellow pastors that “a school for Swedes” would open in the winter, and by the middle of January 1863, enrollment had reached 11 (not counting his own congregation’s children). The school was coeducational from the beginning, some 20 years before any other Augustana institution could be called the same.

The school was a short-term project for Norelius, but it was successful enough that the Minnesota Conference was willing to adopt it. The conference voted to relocate the school in East Union, a rural settlement in Carver County, and referred the matter to the Augustana Synod, which already was supporting Augustana College and Theological Seminary in Chicago. The synod unanimously adopted a constitution for the new school outlining a “right relationship” to its namesake school and giving it its first name—Minnesota Elementar Skola (which, in the Swedish system, indicated a preparatory or secondary school).

When it opened in the fall of 1863, the school occupied a small log church building that had been erected by the East Union congregation but never completed. During the first winter and spring, it provided little protection from cold and drafts. In 1865, when Scandinavian Lutherans were commemorating the 1,000th anniversary of the death of St. Ansgar, the “Apostle of the North,” the school’s name was changed to St. Ansgar’s Academy, and under that name it was incorporated. A campus of five acres, located a bit south of the church, was bought and presented to the school by some Scandinavian soldiers of Company H of the Ninth Regiment of the Minnesota Volunteers, and in 1866 the church building was partially torn down and rebuilt on the new land.

The principal, or president, during all but one of the 13 so-called “Carver years” was the Rev. Andrew Jackson, who was also the chief—and often only—instructor as well as the treasurer, librarian, and janitor. (John Frodeen was named principal in 1873 but resigned a year later to return to school, forcing Jackson to return as acting head.) Tuition for students was five dollars each term. Progress was reported, but the school was slow to grow, and board and lodging were persistent problems for students. By 1872 the Minnesota Conference had appointed

a committee, led by Eric Norelius and including his former student Jonas Magny, who was by then an ordained pastor, to consider an endowment fund for the academy; the committee's report in February 1873 went beyond the endowment itself to note widespread dissatisfaction with the academy's rural location.

Norelius favored moving the academy to Minneapolis and secured promises of land and other donations from leading Minneapolis citizens. The conference accepted his plan in May of 1873, selected a new board of directors, and reincorporated the school as Gustavus Adolphus Literary and Theological Institute, in honor of Gustav II Adolf, the renowned Swedish king who created the *gymnasia* system of education that still exists in Sweden. But, due to the financial panic of 1873, anticipated donations did not materialize, and the conference was forced to postpone the move when it met in October.

At that point, a delegation of five men from St. Peter approached the conference, asking on what terms their community might be selected as the new site. The leader of the delegation was Swedish immigrant Andrew Thorson of Scandian Grove, an adventurer in the California gold rush who was now settled as a farmer and the register of deeds in Nicollet County. The other four were all prominent business leaders in St. Peter—none of them Swedish or Lutheran. The conference responded that a successful bid would include a campus site and \$10,000 for a building fund.

The St. Peter delegation's subsequent bid was the only one the conference received, and it was accepted in February of 1874. Thorson managed to obtain sufficient pledges from the membership of the Swedish Lutheran Church in St. Peter, from the 200 members of his own Scandian Grove Lutheran Church—a large part of that church's \$3,000 pledge coming from him and his brother-in-law, Andrew Nelson, a board member of St. Ansgar's Academy since 1872 who later became treasurer of Gustavus—and from "Americans" (read that as non-Swedish citizens) in St. Peter. Ten acres of land on a mostly bare hillside on the west side of town had been donated for the campus, and a plan was submitted for a 60' x 90' three-story stone building (which some critics maintained was much too large and grandiose).

Owing to construction disagreements and financial difficulties, the first academic term in the newly named Gustavus Adolphus College started a year late, on October 16, 1876, and even then the lecture rooms were not yet finished and the furnishings not in place. The building, which is now known as Old Main, housed up to 100 male students in 17 rooms on the top two floors, with library, lecture rooms, and professor's office on the main floor and a dining hall, kitchen, and laundry in the basement. The school's new head, the Rev. Jonas Nyquist, also lived in the basement with his family for a time.

Norelius (who had been named president of the Augustana Synod in 1874), Nyquist, and Minnesota Conference leaders intended to make Gustavus Adolphus a college in fact as well as name as soon as circumstances permitted. But 1876 saw only 51 students and two instructors. Students who had been at St. Ansgar's were placed in the second class and the rest into the first class. Eventually, three distinct classes evolved with the addition of some preparatory students: one class prepared for entrance to the synod-flagship Augustana College, one was a high school course that extended from November to March, and the remaining one was a "normal" course of four years for teachers. Christianity, Latin, German, and singing were conducted in Swedish, while mathematics and more practical subjects were conducted in English. Music proved popular; the first College band was organized in 1878 and embarked on its first tour in 1881—going by train and wagon back to East Union!

Nyquist had considered himself only a temporary leader but ended up remaining as president and teacher of the courses taught in Swedish for five years. Attendance exceeded 100 by 1880, when the Rev. Matthias Wahlstrom, a graduate of Augustana College who had attended and taught at St. Ansgar's, joined the teaching staff, but the school was still experiencing financial instability. With voices within the conference again calling for a move to the Twin Cities, Nyquist tired of the struggle and announced his resignation.

The school's board recommended that Wahlstrom be elected president, and he took on those responsibilities in 1881 pending formal selection, which came at the conference meeting in February 1882. He immediately announced his intention to make Gustavus a "complete college." The first freshman class was introduced in 1881–82 and the first sophomore class in 1885. The first junior class appeared in 1888, with eight men in that class going on to become seniors in 1889 and graduate with the College's first bachelor's degrees in 1890. One of those graduates, John A. Youngquist, returned to join the faculty in 1892 and remained with the College for 50 years.

Wahlstrom also embarked on a building program and made faculty hiring a priority. Buildings were erected on either side of the "Main" building in 1884 (North and South halls) to be women's residences, and the president and his father personally built a home for his own family (later known as the White House) in that same year. A gymnasium—about the size of a country railroad depot—was built in 1886, financed largely through student subscription. A home for the new and growing music and commercial programs was completed in 1887 between South Hall and Main, at a cost of \$7,000. The larger part of the faculty in the 1880s had theological training, but Wahlstrom was also seeking college and university graduates. In 1882 he hired Jacob Uhler to teach mathematics and natural sciences; the "grand old man" would continue to teach—and live—on campus until 1937. Inez Rundstrom, Augustana College's first woman graduate, was hired to teach French and mathematics in 1894 and remained on the faculty for 48 years.

PART TWO: 'GROWTH AND TRANSITION'

(1890–1913)

Gustavus was still a very small college. The student body continued to grow, but space was cramped and financial support a constant struggle. Enrollment was close to 400 by the end of the century, but this number included the schools of Commerce and Music, the Academy, and the Academy-oriented "Normal" (teacher-training) Department in addition to the College Department. The College Department itself made up only 10–20 percent of the total enrollment, averaging only about 10 graduates per year in the 1890s. Of the 35 graduates between 1890 and 1894, twenty became ministers.

Church support continued to be critical during Matthias Wahlstrom's presidency. The conference asked each congregation to send an "assessment" of between 25 and 37½ cents per communicant member to the College. Congregations sent food for the College dining room. Occasional subscriptions were announced for debt reduction and special projects.

Literary societies were the most significant student organizations of the early days of the College, as there were no fraternities or sororities and no intercollegiate athletics. The Philomathian Society was already active in the early 1880s. In 1887 the Literary Circle appeared. By the 1890s the "Phils" and the "Lits" had developed a keen rivalry, each sponsoring Friday-

evening programs rendered alternately in Swedish and English. The first student newspapers grew out of the written records of these societies and were handwritten.

Musical organizations also were popular. A cornet band had already been in existence for more than a decade, and the first College orchestra was organized in the 1880s. A male chorus had embarked upon a tour in 1887 to raise funds for purchase of a pipe organ, and by the 1890s various vocal and instrumental ensembles were representing the College at churches of the Minnesota Conference.

Great student interest in oratory and debate resulted in the faculty securing membership in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Oratorical Association in 1901. A loose association of Augustana church colleges also sponsored English and Swedish oratorical contests, and Gustavus students participated in temperance contests as well. On April 4, 1902, a chartered train carried about 250 Gustavus student enthusiasts to Northfield for the first state oratorical contest. Gustavus's entrant, Harry Hedberg, finished fourth among the representatives of five competing schools, but the event had a greater significance: the College's colors of black and gold stem from the bunting used on the train coaches, and some of the cheers and songs heard on the trip became traditions in succeeding years.

Interest in competitive athletics was also growing as students were introduced to "American" sports. The first tennis club was organized in 1892–93. In 1896 an athletic club was organized with an initial membership of 40 men. That club was the forerunner of the Centennial Athletic Association, a student-run organization formed in 1900 that guided the College through the formative years of intercollegiate competition by scheduling football, basketball, and baseball games with other schools and neighboring towns when both the Minnesota Conference and the faculty hedged on granting approval. The first intercollegiate game played by a Gustavus team was a football game—an 11–6 win—played on November 6, 1902, at the riding park in St. Peter (now the Nicollet County Fairgrounds) against a team from Mankato Normal. Credit for playing the first intercollegiate basketball game goes to the 1902–03 women's team, which bowed to Mankato Normal 16–2 at the St. Peter Opera House on February 14, 1903—two nights before the opera house burned to the ground.

But a battle much more momentous than an oratory contest or a football game was under way. College officials were seeking to build a new auditorium, and that project created much discussion in and beyond the conference. The call to move the College to the Twin Cities was renewed. When the conference met in October 1902, the influential Norelius (who had been elected Augustana Synod president again in 1899) now favored St. Peter, but the Twin Cities advocates were in the majority; the conference voted to make the move if proponents could meet certain conditions, including raising \$200,000 before the next meeting in May 1903. But only \$132,000 had been raised by the deadline, and the move was tabled for a year. Meanwhile, the St. Peter community put together a more modest offer that included \$15,000 for the auditorium. In May 1904, by which time only \$150,000 had been pledged for removal, the conference determined that Gustavus should stay in St. Peter. At the same time, they voted to open a church high school in Minneapolis named Minnesota College, hoping that it might grow into the Twin Cities school many wanted; however, while it competed for church funding, its academic program never advanced to the collegiate level.

Wahlstrom had long been discouraged by the struggle for funding and the ongoing debate over the College's location, and in 1903 he announced his intention to resign the following spring. His replacement was the Rev. Dr. Peter A. Mattson, an 1892 graduate of Gustavus with a scholarly and legalistic manner who had been a vocal supporter of moving the College to the

Twin Cities. Instead, it was he who moved to St. Peter in August 1904. His administration would be marked by conflicts with students, faculty, and the board.

Although interest in and enthusiasm for athletics was growing among Gustavus students, Mattson looked upon athletics as interfering with the religious, moral, and academic life of the College. His opposition, together with financial problems, put an end to football in the fall of 1904. But if the situation during Mattson's first year was discouraging for students, what followed was catastrophic: meeting in June 1905, the Augustana Synod resolved to forbid *all* intercollegiate competition by its colleges.

The Gustavus faculty protested that the edict was "too sweeping and apt to be detrimental to the institution if carried out," but Mattson insisted on strict adherence to the synod's directive, although other synod schools in fact did not ban all sports. The following years were marked by continuing student agitation against the ban at all of the synod's schools; at Gustavus two secret societies—the "Reds" and the "Grays"—arose among students who were participating in athletics in defiance of the ban. By 1910 opposition to the ban was growing and support for it eroding throughout the synod. At the synod's meeting in the summer of 1910, reinstatement of all sports but football carried by a close vote. (Football would not be reinstated at Gustavus until 1917.)

Three new buildings were erected during Mattson's tenure. With the St. Peter community's purse of \$15,000 in hand, the cornerstone of the new auditorium was laid in September 1904 and the building was ready for use in January 1905. In that same month, John A. Johnson, former editor of the *St. Peter Herald* and a close friend of the College, was inaugurated as governor of Minnesota. Johnson had promised to help Gustavus in any way that he could, and he made good on that promise in 1908 while running for his third term as governor. Meeting with philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, Johnson persuaded Carnegie to promise \$32,500 to the College if the College could match the gift; Johnson then undertook the task of raising the matching funds himself. Although his efforts barely exceeded \$10,000, he induced Carnegie to make good on his pledge anyway. On October 10, 1908, during a gathering in St. Paul to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Lutheran Minnesota Conference, he was able to present Carnegie's check and his own collection to surprised College officials. With \$43,000 in hand, the College could build a much-needed women's residence hall and a central heating plant and still have money left to add to the endowment. When it was completed in 1910, the new residence was named in memory of Johnson, who had died suddenly a year earlier.

Mattson's troubles with the board, with the athletics issue, and with student unrest reached a climax in the spring of 1911, and he tendered his resignation. He would be elected president of the Lutheran Minnesota Conference two years later and remain at that post from 1913 to 1939. The conference named Professor and Vice President Jacob Uhler to be acting president while it sought a new leader for the school. Uhler served in that capacity for two years even as he continued to teach his regular courses.

PART THREE: 'PREXY'

(1913–1942)

When the Rev. Oscar J. Johnson resigned as president of Luther College (formerly Luther Academy) in Wahoo, Neb., in 1913 to assume the presidency at Gustavus, his new institution comprised four departments: the College Department enrolled 123 students, the Academy enrolled 69, the School of Commerce 98, and the School of Music 120. (A fifth department, the

Normal Department, had become the Department of Education in the college curriculum in 1911.) During the 29 years that “Prexy” would remain at the helm, the College Department would grow in strength while other departments changed or were dropped. The School of Commerce was discontinued in 1923 and the Academy, oldest of all departments, was discontinued in 1931. The Conservatory of Music remained in the catalog up to the time of World War II but became a regular department of the College in 1943.

“O.J.,” as Johnson was known familiarly, had been secretary of the committee of college and conference presidents that had recommended in 1910 the liberalizing of the synod’s ban on intercollegiate athletics. On the College’s board he had an able colleague in the Hon. Henry N. Benson of St. Peter, a lawyer, state senator, and later Minnesota attorney general who had graduated from Gustavus in 1893 and had been a board member since 1902. Benson would be the board’s chairman for an unprecedented 28 years (1916–1944). Johnson would seldom act without conferring with Benson first.

The Johnson administration presided over great changes for both the Augustana Synod and the College. The late Doniver Lund, who taught history at Gustavus from 1946 to 1986, noted some of them in his centennial history of the College published in 1963:

When “O.J.” came the Swedish language was used in most churches. When he left a Swedish language service was a rare nostalgic remembrance of the past. In his early days as president the Church did not always take a defensible stand on the new type [of] entertainment called motion pictures. When he left movies had a wide acceptance. The new sororities and fraternities had been headaches for Mattson; by World War II they had won for themselves an acknowledged place on campus. The partial . . . athletic program inherited from Uhler and Mattson became in three decades so spectacularly successful that some people figured there must be an over-emphasis.

Funding was a continuing issue for the College. The alumni association had broached the idea of an endowment fund as early as 1895, and subscription efforts were common during Mattson’s tenure. In 1904 the College had approached Pastor Lars Gustaf Almén, an active worker for the Augustana Synod and a promoter of Gustavus, to lead a drive for \$100,000 to establish a building and endowment fund. During the five years Almén worked on the drive, he received 1,355 subscription notes and pledges for about \$62,000, and was credited later by some College officials as “the real pioneer and founder” of the endowment fund. (Almén’s interest was not simply financial—all nine of his children graduated from Gustavus between 1899 and 1920.)

When railroad baron James J. Hill promised acting president Jacob Uhler a donation of \$40,000 if the College could raise \$200,000 from other sources by May 1, 1914, it became the impetus for the College’s first real endowment drive. President Johnson was forced to throw himself into fundraising work from the moment he arrived on campus. As Hill’s deadline approached, almost all of the Minnesota Conference’s churches had been canvassed but the amount pledged was still \$40,000 short. When the conference met on February 21, 1914, a unanimous decision was made to raise the difference immediately, and individual pastors quickly pledged the amount they figured was needed to cover the shortage. However, when final calculations were made later that evening, a \$9,000 error was discovered. Once again, citizens from St. Peter stepped forward to help the College, eventually providing more than \$12,000 to ensure Hill’s donation.

Gustavus began to assume the look and feel of a modern college during Johnson’s tenure. In 1914 the system of majors and minors was introduced to the curriculum to replace the former course system. The elective system was adopted for the freshman and sophomore classes as well, except in regard to English, gymnastics, and Christianity (which was compulsory in all four

classes). By 1916, when Gustavus was first placed on the accredited list by the North Central Association, even mathematics had become an elective in the College Department. In 1920 library facilities were improved when the library was moved from the second floor of Old Main to Commerce Hall, which had been claimed for other uses as enrollment in the School of Commerce dwindled.

The most pressing facility need for the modern college in the early 1900s was an adequate gymnasium. In 1916, recalling the tiny “old barn” that they had frequented, a group of alumni decided to raise funds for a new gymnasium. A year later, the conference was asked to permit erection of a \$50,000 facility and responded that the gym could be built once money was in hand. However, a world war changed all that.

For two years, the College was reorganized for war. The great majority of male students were soldiers in the U.S. Army. Special classes in military drill, telegraphy, and food conservation were offered. Extracurricular activities were curtailed. The academic term started in October in 1917 and 1918, vacations were shortened, and the year was divided into three terms instead of two semesters.

After the Armistice, students flocked back to College. A new gymnasium again became a rallying cry. In February 1919, at a student meeting after chapel services organized by Luther Youngdahl '19—who would go on to become governor of the state 30 years later—students signed pledge cards to raise nearly \$13,000 for the gym. However, the College was also pressed by other needs, particularly for endowment funds. Consequently, in 1920, the conference was asked to authorize an endowment campaign as well as soften the restriction on starting construction of a gym before all funds were in hand.

The conference not only agreed to those requests but also authorized faculty salary increases and raised its annual appropriation for the College to \$25,000—all this in spite of the fact that a separate campaign for a theological seminary had already been launched by the synod. The cornerstone for the new gymnasium (now a \$150,000 project) was laid in October 1921, with 1903 graduate Clarence Magney, mayor of Duluth and a son of Jonas Magney (Eric Norelius's first student almost 40 years before), delivering the principal address. (Another son, Gottlieb Magney, was the architect.) The building was completed in 1922 and later named the O.J. Johnson Student Union in President Johnson's honor.

The synod had finally rescinded its ban on intercollegiate football in 1917, and by 1920 the College had become a charter member of the newly organized Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC), a membership maintained to this day. With the new gym in 1922 came a new director of physical education, D.C. Mitchell, who two years later hired an assistant who would have a profound effect on athletics at the College. When Mitchell resigned in 1926, the assistant, George Myrum, was promoted to director of athletics. In the next 12 years, before his untimely death in a bus accident in the fall of 1938, he made a name for the College and himself in state college athletics, culminating in five state championships—in football, swimming, basketball, gymnastics, and baseball—during the 1937–38 school year.

In 1929, with an enthusiastic push from Myrum, the College erected a stadium—the first one in the region with lights to permit evening football games. An unincorporated and nebulous “Athletic Association of the College” and interested citizens of St. Peter assumed responsibility for its financing. Eight years later, although debt still remained on the stadium, Myrum pushed for construction of a fieldhouse, and alumni and parents of athletes responded enthusiastically. Myrum, unfortunately, did not live to see its completion; it was named in his memory when it opened in 1939.

However, the College's unprecedented success in athletics led to charges that it was overemphasizing them and that athletes were being given special treatment. Rival colleges acted on rumors of irregularities to bring the matter of Gustavus's continued participation in the MIAC to athletic conference representatives, who voted to suspend Gustavus for the 1941–42 school year. The matter attracted a great deal of attention in the press, much of it sympathetic with Gustavus and characterizing the charges as “sour grapes” and “incapable of being proven.” In the final analysis, the publicity did not help any of the schools in the MIAC, and in 1942 Gustavus was reinstated.

Declamation and debate remained popular among students during the Johnson era, so much so that the College determined to improve upon the amateur coaching and instruction in that area that had nevertheless produced prizes in forensic and oratory contests regularly. Professor J. Stanley Gray was appointed to the speech department in 1921. In 1923, the College was one of four schools in the state to organize chapters of Pi Kappa Delta, the national forensic honor society. In 1924, Evan Anderson succeeded Gray and began a 39-year tenure that would bring the College national recognition in debate and oratory. Gustavus teams won national debate championships in 1930 and 1934, and the College carried off first prizes in the state and divisional oratorical and the state and national peace oratorical contests in 1931–32, and in the men's and women's state oratorical contests in 1941–42. Anderson influenced generations: Hap LeVander '62, the son of 1932 state oratorical champion Harold LeVander '32, won the contest in 1962!

A number of the College's celebrated speakers found their way into the ministry: In 1926, more than 40 percent of the theological students at Augustana Theological Seminary were Gustavus graduates. Both halves of the 1930 national debate championship team, Wilton Bergstrand '30 and Edgar Carlson '30, went on to seminary and were ordained. By the mid-'30s, it was estimated that fully one-third of the clergy in the Augustana Church were graduates of Gustavus.

College enrollment had increased from 123 when “Prexy” arrived to well over 500 as the 1930s ended. To handle the growing numbers of students, the College built a new residence for men in 1929 (naming it in honor of Jacob Uhler in 1941) and in 1939 opened a new hall for women named in honor of longtime professor Inez Rundstrom. In 1941, Johnson, who had turned 70 a year earlier, announced that he wished to retire.

PART IV: COMING OF AGE – THE CARLSON LEGACY

(1942–1969)

The years of World War II were turbulent for the nation and for Gustavus Adolphus College. President O.J. Johnson had retired in 1942, and his successor, the Rev. Dr. Walter Lunden (originally Lundeen), a 1922 Gustavus graduate who assumed duties in July of 1942, believed that great changes were needed at the College, within faculty and administration and particularly in its financial management. He expected full board compliance with his initiatives.

Lunden worked to establish close relations with Navy authorities, who were seeking sites for training facilities, but he also surprised the community—and his new athletics director, 1936 graduate Lloyd Hollingsworth—by announcing three weeks after his installation in November 1942 that the board had decided to discontinue intercollegiate athletics for the duration of the war. As students protested, the board met to reconsider its decision. Lunden reminded board members of their promise to support him, arguing that his program “could not be carried out if

Intercollegiate Athletics would be permitted.” The board, by that time starting to question Lunden’s management style and more than a little concerned about “any Method employed that would tend to ruin our college,” rescinded the ban. Lunden responded by offering his resignation.

The board tabled Lunden’s resignation and later voted to refuse it, but confidence in his leadership had been shaken. Lunden meanwhile turned his attention to assisting the war effort, securing a U.S. Navy V-12 unit for the campus in spite of some board opposition and accepting a military commission himself. When he asked for a leave of absence so he might serve actively in the U.S. Army, the board turned him down, feeling it could not get along without a sitting president for an indefinite period. Lunden again offered his resignation, and this time the board accepted it. His presidency had spanned less than 18 months.

Student athletics were again preserved, but the student victory was short-lived. In 1943 the MIAC cancelled all official conference competition for the duration of the war. However, Coach Hollingsworth would achieve great success in post-war years—particularly in football, in which the College won six consecutive conference titles between 1950 and 1955—and would be instrumental in helping to develop the strong athletics tradition Gustavus still honors.

Philosophy professor Oscar Winfield, who had been named vice president at Lunden’s suggestion, served as acting president for about nine months while the conference considered candidates for the position. After much discussion and informal polling, the list was narrowed to two highly qualified—and familiar—candidates: 1930 graduates and former debate partners Wilton Bergstrand, at that time executive director of the Augustana Synod Luther League, and Edgar Carlson, who was teaching at Augustana Seminary. In March 1944 the conference finally recommended Carlson; he accepted and assumed the presidency in September.

Carlson inherited a college whose enrollment included 388 Navy V-12 trainees and 95 civilian students, but within a year circumstances had changed dramatically. The V-12 program was due to end in October of 1945 but actually outlasted the war, so that large numbers of returning GI’s were already enrolling as the naval trainees were leaving. In March 1946, 529 students were enrolled; by the start of the 1946–47 year, enrollment had swelled to 1,127. Building and expansion marked the Carlson years: construction during his administration exceeded that of all previous presidents combined.

Housing was an immediate concern. Residents of St. Peter opened their homes. The interior of the stadium was converted to a dorm for about 40 men. South of the stadium, several small pre-fab homes were built at a cost of about \$1,000 each to accommodate married veterans and their families; soon after, 15 expandable house trailers, purchased from the government, were placed on what is now the College’s main parking lot for more GI families. More than 60 small trailers claimed from military bases and construction sites were also put to use. One fall, three large rooms in the basement of the St. Peter Armory were used to house 60 men (who nicknamed their new home “the Bastille”). The College erected the “Ranch House” (also known as the “Ranchereno”), a barracks-style building with four wings designed like an “H,” providing space for 24 males in each wing.

In the spring of 1946, ground was broken for what was to become Wahlstrom Hall, but although it was planned as a women’s residence for about 200, the College agreed to convert it to a men’s dorm (with 60 percent of spaces going to veterans) in order to secure the necessary priorities for materials from the government housing administration. Men occupied the hall even before it was completed for the 1947–48 school year, with women assigned to Uhler Hall. After

one year, Wahlstrom occupancy reverted to the original plan, although due to the continuing housing crunch, nearly 400 women were assigned to live there for each of the next several years.

Enrollment dropped as the GI generation graduated, but in 1954 it began to rise again. Another men's residence, Sorensen Hall, was completed in that year. The student body grew by another 50 percent in the 1960s, going from 1,148 in 1960 to 1,872 in 1969, and more residences were needed: Sohre Hall, sited south of Wahlstrom, for women in 1962; North Hall for men in 1962; Valley View Hall (now named Pittman Hall) for women in 1963; and the Link (now Gibbs Hall), connecting Sorensen and North, for men in 1967. Also in 1967, the College built Co-ed Hall (now Norelius Hall), a daring design at the time with 200 men and 200 women living in close proximity.

Residence halls were not the only facilities being raised on campus. The College answered the desperate need for classroom space by hauling in war-surplus structures. The "Classroom Annex" was moved in sections from an air base in South Dakota and erected on a concrete slab on the north side of the campus. The Little Theater, with seating for 360, was grafted to the west side of the Classroom Annex. Two more pre-fab, wood-frame structures were erected together to become the art and music wings of the "Art Barn."

The first permanent educational facility built during the Carlson administration was a new library, completed in 1948 and financed largely by gifts from the Augustana Church. Plans for a new library had been made during both the Johnson and Lunden administrations, but the depression and World War II, respectively, prevented the College from acting upon them. The library was dedicated in memory of Count Folke Bernadotte, the U.N. mediator to Palestine who had been assassinated in September 1948. In 1950, that association led the College to establish the Folke Bernadotte Memorial Foundation, which provided scholarships for international students studying at Gustavus and funds for the Bernadotte Institute of World Affairs. For 15 years, the annual institute brought world leaders to campus for discussion of current affairs; it provided the foundation for the College's current peace education program.

Other major additions to the campus included a new wing attached by walkway to the Johnson Student Union, built in 1960 to house the campus post office, bookstore, food service and dining room, and "Canteen," or snack bar. Vickner Language Hall was dedicated in the College's centennial year of 1962 as a gift from 1910 graduate Bertha Almén Vickner and her late husband, former professor Edwin Vickner. The Vickners had earlier donated to the College a significant collection of books, now known as the Almén-Vickner Collection, a collection of paintings and reproductions, and a house on the edge of the campus (now the Guest House).

The College also took steps to improve its science education. Nobel Hall of Science was dedicated in 1963 in honor of Swedish philanthropist Alfred Nobel with 26 Nobel laureates in attendance—the largest single gathering of Nobel Prize-winners to that date. In that same year, a delegation from Gustavus was invited to attend the Nobel Prize ceremonies in Stockholm, Sweden. The delegation traveled to Stockholm with an ambitious idea: to convince the Nobel Foundation board to endorse a series of scientific conferences to be held on the Gustavus campus. The Nobel name, they argued, would lend credibility to the event. The foundation board agreed to the request, provided that conference organizers ensured that the event would follow strict standards for quality. The first Nobel Conference was held in January 1965. Today the conference attracts more than 5,000 people annually, including representatives from nearly 100 high schools and 75 colleges and universities. Gustavus has been host to more than 90 Nobel Prize-winners, including some 60 invited for these conferences.

Carlson's building program included building the faculty and the academic program as well. Faculty development became a major priority, and the College's first dean of the faculty, Elmer Siebrecht, was named in 1945. Immediately following the war, hiring fully qualified people for faculty positions was difficult; in 1947, for example, no one in the departments of history, political science, or sociology had earned the Ph.D. in their field. However, 15 years later, half of the full-time people in sociology and all of the full-time people in history and political science had their terminal degrees. On the program side, Gustavus adopted a bold new curriculum in 1964 that measured academic offerings in courses rather than credits and made the College one of the first in the nation to employ a 4-1-4 calendar, consisting of two semesters, during which students typically take four-course loads, separated by a month-long January Term accommodating a single, innovatively structured class or travel course. Today Gustavus is one of some 60 U.S. colleges using such a calendar.

But the building project closest to Carlson's heart was a chapel for the campus. The first memorial gift designated for a new chapel was actually received in 1939, and by 1955 the conference was considering a fund for such a project and an architect was hired to develop plans. With the enthusiastic support of the Rev. Dr. Leonard Kendall, president of the conference, and many Gustavus graduates who were by then influential clergy in the Augustana Church, congregations adopted a goal of raising \$450,000 in cash and authorizing a \$150,000 loan to build "a college church for our church college." By 1958 that fund had reached just over a quarter of a million dollars, and College officials met with conference officials in Minneapolis to review construction bids. When the only bid received turned out to be \$900,000—50 percent higher than had been expected—Carlson was crushed, fearing that his dream would not be realized.

Enter George Carlstrom, owner of a construction firm in Mankato, Minn., who had told Mankato insurance agent Ray Sponberg, a 1937 graduate who was on the executive board of the conference at that time, to look him up once they'd opened the bid, as he was certain the bid would be too high. Sponberg and College business manager Rud Lawson arranged to have Carlson meet Carlstrom, who told the president that he could build the chapel for the budgeted cost. His proposal was approved by the conference on Carlson's advice, and ground was broken in 1959.

The chapel was finished in 1961 and dedicated in the College's centennial year of 1962 as a final gift to the College from the congregations of the Augustana Lutheran Church, which in that same year was merging into the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). Between Carlson's first year and the centennial, synodical and conference support for the College had increased by more than tenfold, to nearly \$300,000 annually, and there was every reason to expect that church support would continue under the LCA. After all, Gustavus would remain the only Minnesota college of the LCA, as it had been the only school of the Augustana Synod since the closing of Minnesota College in 1930.

PART FIVE: BUILDING A GREATER GUSTAVUS

(1969–1991)

When the Rev. Dr. Edgar Carlson '30 chose to step down as president of Gustavus Adolphus College in 1968 after 24 years in office, Dean of the College Albert Swanson took on responsibilities as acting president for a year while the College's board conducted a thorough search for a new leader. Their choice was Frank Barth, a financial executive with the Chicago-

based Pettibone Corporation who was the first non-clergy member to hold the presidency of the College. (The College's third president, John Frodeen, was not yet an ordained pastor when he was named principal of St. Ansgar's, but he was studying for the ministry and was later ordained.) Barth himself frequently quoted the *Gustavian Weekly's* words, "There's a moneychanger in the Temple!"

Barth came in as issues of racial tension and opposition to the war in Indochina were reaching into what had previously been quiet and even isolated small colleges. Student activism was high, and presiding over a college in such uneasy times was difficult. In retrospect, one of Barth's great accomplishments was that he kept a lid on things. He made it a point to know the students and to dialogue frequently with them. By not prohibiting or hindering protests, he helped to make them teachable moments.

Barth's administration was marked by several building projects and one great loss. During the early morning hours of January 8, 1970, the Auditorium was completely gutted by a fire. It was one of the coldest nights of the winter, and a frozen hydrant stymied firefighters. The blaze was so intense that even the skeleton of brick outer walls left standing lost its structural integrity and had to be razed. Administrative offices were relocated in lounge areas of the Student Union while College officials combed through the debris trying to salvage academic transcripts and alumni records, most of the latter eventually having to be reconstructed. By 1972 a new administration building had been erected on the site of the old Aud and named in honor of President Carlson and his wife, Ebba.

In 1971 students were able to vacate both the Art Barn and the Little Theater when the Harold and Ruth Schaefer Fine Arts Center was completed. The center comprised two wings, one housing the Jussi Björling Recital Hall, two theater spaces—the Evan and Evelyn Anderson Theatre and a smaller, experimental stage—and classroom, office, and practice space for the music department and the speech and theatre department (now two separate departments: communication studies and theatre and dance); and the other housing the art department, an exhibition gallery, and a studio for the College's new sculptor-in-residence, 1952 graduate Paul Granlund, many of whose works now dot the campus.

Fine arts programs were further enhanced when the first Christmas in Christ Chapel program was produced in 1973. The program has become an annual tradition at the College. Also in 1973, development of an arboretum began on the west side of the campus with volunteers planting the first tree seedlings.

Ground had been broken for the fine arts center without all the necessary funding identified. Construction of a new library would begin in a similar fashion: Although the College did not have the necessary funds in hand, it would lose the opportunity to receive a \$1 million federal grant and a similarly sized long-term, low-interest loan if it didn't act immediately. So Gustavus officials committed to raising \$1 million to build the second Folke Bernadotte Memorial Library, which opened in 1972. Upon its completion, the first Bernadotte Library building was remodeled to house the Departments of Economics and Management, History, Psychology, and Sociology and Anthropology and renamed the A.H. Anderson Social Science Center.

Barth's administration had also committed in 1971 to building the first phase of what would eventually be an enclosed ice hockey arena. With the arena, library, and fine arts center all going up at about the same time, the College had to borrow large sums of money and began to experience a cash flow deficit that had reached almost \$2.5 million by 1975.

Edward Lindell succeeded Barth as the College's 11th president in 1975. He inherited a school with a growing enrollment that had already reached 2,000 students, a nearly \$10 million budget, 130 faculty members, a healthy relationship with the Minnesota and Red River Valley synods of the LCA, 10 residence halls, 2 bands, 3 choirs, an orchestra, 17 intercollegiate sports, and new facilities all over the campus. But underneath the surface, the accumulated deficit in working capital had become a critical problem. Lindell made it his priority to solve that problem.

Lindell curtailed expenses wherever possible. He delayed his own inauguration until June of 1976, when it was added to the schedule of the Minnesota Synod meeting on campus. The inauguration program itself was mimeographed. He combined off-campus meetings with visits to potential donors and foundations. He froze departmental budgets. He announced a two-year salary freeze for faculty and administration, which was accepted in surprisingly good spirit by most staff.

As successful as he was in reducing expenditures, Lindell was equally adept at fundraising, and he and his wife, Patty, made a great team. He led a team that raised \$2.3 million in his first year, \$3 million in each of the next two years, and more than \$4 million in each of the next two. The College had never before raised more than \$3 million in a year. The short-term indebtedness and cash flow problem was corrected by the end of the 1970s and the College's endowment grew by a factor of three. Meanwhile, seeking a way to supplement the library's frozen book-purchasing budget and to avoid similar fluctuations in support in the future, Patty played a major role in organizing Gustavus Library Associates. Within a few years, GLA had developed into one of the most successful and honored friends-of-the-library groups in the United States.

President Lindell announced his resignation in 1980 upon achieving his goals of righting the College's financial ship. The board named as acting president the Rev. Abner Arthur, a 1931 graduate who was then serving as vice president for church relations and who had previously filled in for three months between Barth's and Lindell's terms. In March 1981 the board announced the election of 1949 graduate and psychology professor John Kendall (son of the Augustana Synod's former Minnesota Conference president, the Rev. Dr. Leonard Kendall) as the College's 12th president.

Recognition and advancements came on several fronts during Kendall's administration. In 1983 the College was awarded membership in Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's most prestigious honor society recognizing liberal learning, following a process that had begun during Lindell's tenure and had been championed by English professor Gerhard Alexis. A new, state-of-the-art physical education complex, Lund Center, opened in 1984, and the old Myrum Fieldhouse was torn down. In 1985, the College unveiled a new curriculum that included an alternate, integrated core of courses called "Curriculum II," open each year to 60 first-year students, and a "Writing Across the Curriculum" component. In 1991 the humanities were boosted with the addition of Ogden P. Confer Hall, and the sciences benefited from the addition of F.W. Olin Hall for physics, mathematics, and computer science and the subsequent renovation of Nobel Hall.

The Gustavus Alumni Association also earned national recognition, winning 18 consecutive awards between 1971 and 1988 for sustained excellence in annual alumni giving from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). College officials had initiated an annual fund in 1954, and it had been spectacularly successful in providing support for the annual operating budget, culminating in 61.6 percent alumni participation and more than \$1 million received in the College's 125th anniversary year, 1987.

The year 1987 was also significant for Gustavus because its governing church body, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), merged into what would be the fourth-largest Protestant church body in the United States, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), following a five-year process. The Augustana Church, which had founded the College in 1862, was an immigrant church that retained its Swedish identity, resisting a merger that united many other Lutheran bodies in 1918. Gustavus was celebrating its centennial year in 1962 when the Augustana Church finally gave up its separate identity to become part of the much larger LCA, but while the College inherited a larger constituency, it remained the only four-year school in the Minnesota Synod. In the new ELCA, the College's relationship with the church would change, and not just in terms of governance.

Other Lutheran colleges in Minnesota—Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Concordia College in Moorhead, and St. Olaf College in Northfield—as well as Luther College in nearby Decorah, Iowa, were now colleges of the same church body (there were 30 nationwide), sharing and competing for students and resources from ELCA congregations. Colleges were offered three options for relating to the Church: Trustees could be approved by the national ELCA convention, by a regional synod convention, or by a convention of an association of congregations. Led by Kendall and Vice President for Church Relations Dennis Johnson, Gustavus chose to develop an association of congregations expressing interest in the mission and future of the College. The Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations was formed in 1989 and now includes more than 535 congregations. The association convenes on campus annually, and among its tasks is electing members of the College's board of trustees. The president of the association serves *ex officio* on the Gustavus board.

PART SIX: AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

(1991–2015)

After President Kendall announced his retirement in 1991, the board named Axel Steuer, a university professor and administrator who at the time of his election had been executive assistant to the president of Occidental College in Los Angeles, as the 13th president of the College. Steuer worked diligently to build the endowment and advance the national reputation of Gustavus, but his shining moment came in March 1998, when a super cell spawning multiple tornadoes devastated the campus, breaking 80 percent of the College's windows, leveling nearly 2,000 trees, and toppling the chapel's spire. The storm caused more than \$50 million in damages and scoured Johnson Hall so severely that it later had to be razed. Even as many questioned whether the school could reopen for fall—or ever again—Steuer boldly announced that Gustavus would reopen to complete the spring term and graduate its seniors on time. He then drove the rebuilding efforts, bringing students back in three weeks and effecting a recovery so complete that the College was able to recruit a record first-year class (695) that fall.

With so much of the College's residential program affected, Steuer turned his attention to building a proposed campus center addition, rebuilding and improving residence halls, and erecting a new “international hall.” Ground was broken for the C. Charles Jackson Campus Center during the fall of 1998, about two years ahead of schedule, and the facility was ready for use by the spring of 2000. A long-awaited outdoor running track was finished in the fall of 2000, and at the same time the Curtis and Arleen Carlson International Center was dedicated.

As Gustavus Adolphus College advanced into the 21st century, its annual enrollment had exceeded 2,500 students. Full-time faculty numbered 170, and the College's endowment stood at

\$87 million. It had earned a reputation for offering strong science, writing, music, athletics, study-abroad, and service-learning programs.

President Steuer believed strongly in the importance of character development among college students and supported programs and initiatives emphasizing community service. With his leadership, Gustavus played a major role in establishing the Minnesota Campus Compact, a coalition of 46 schools committed to community service. He began to focus on new opportunities for student-faculty collaboration in research and creativity. Early in his tenure, a presidential task force compiled a strategic planning report on the College's strengths and weaknesses that, in addition to producing an enduring mission statement, identified five core values particular to the Gustavus community: excellence, community, justice, service, and faith. While those values received little attention at the time, more would be made of them later.

When President Steuer unexpectedly resigned in 2002, 1960 graduate Dennis Johnson, who had been vice president for college relations, was named to serve as president for an interim. As part of a scheduled North Central Association accreditation review, he organized a communitywide planning initiative, which produced a self-study restating the earlier task force's core values

In March 2003, the board announced the selection of James L. Peterson, a 1964 graduate who had been CEO of the Science Museum of Minnesota, as the 15th president of Gustavus. In one of his first public addresses, he declared his firm commitment to the College's five core values, and the community embraced their integration into campus life. Peterson, perhaps more intentionally than any of his predecessors, tried to define the College's commitment to the core value of "faith" in ways that recognized the many faith traditions now represented in the community.

On Peterson's watch, Gustavus's endowment passed the \$100 million mark and a strategic directions process was instituted. A new residence hall (Southwest) was built and an outdated one (Wahlstrom) razed. The football field was moved—and a new stadium built—to open the way for development of the west mall. On the academic side, a new position, provost, was created to oversee all academic programs and planning.

When Peterson announced his intention to retire following the 2007–08 year, the College's Board of Trustees mounted a nationwide search for a new leader and in April 2008 announced the appointment of Jack R. Ohle, a proven administrator with strong leadership skills and broad experience in higher education who had served as president of Wartburg College for a decade, as the College's 16th president. The board was seeking a strategic planning process that would yield more tangible results. Ohle responded by expanding the existing process into a much broader initiative, "Commission Gustavus 150," an ambitious project to chart the College's future involving some 500 volunteers from all of the College's several constituencies, which the board unanimously endorsed. The process included eight task forces and a series of national summits that helped distill a list of more than 430 recommendations into 236 strategic goals—a number of which are already complete or being addressed. Part of Commission Gustavus 150's work was to plan for the College's sesquicentennial celebration in 2011–12.

The College broke ground on April 16, 2010, for a new academic building on the site of the original Hollingsworth Football Field. (The new stadium had been erected west of Lund Center and completed in time for the 2007 football season.) The new state-of-the-art, eco-friendly academic facility, named in honor of alumni benefactors Warren and Donna Beck '67 '66, houses the Departments of Communication Studies, Economics and Management, History, Psychological Sciences, and Sociology and Anthropology and is part of a larger construction

initiative that also includes the major renovation of Anderson Social Science Center and the Nobel Hall of Science as well as the extension of the west mall—now named in honor of former board member Al Annexstad—from Christ Chapel to Linnaeus Arboretum. Beck Academic Hall was ready for the fall 2011 semester.

Gustavus Adolphus College opened its 13-month celebration of its sesquicentennial (150 years) on September 30, 2011, in Lund Center Arena as more than 750 alumni, faculty and staff, and friends of the College gathered for a kickoff dinner and program. Then-board-chair Mark Bernhardson '71 announced the opening of the public phase of Campaign Gustavus, a \$150 million comprehensive fundraising effort. More than 25 Sesquicentennial Celebration events were held throughout the country during the 2011–12 academic year and into the summer of 2012. In October 2011 Their Majesties King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden made a Royal visit to Gustavus to honor the College's 150 years; nearly 2,000 people—including 1,000 St. Peter schoolchildren—lined the Eckman Mall walkway to see the royal party process to Christ Chapel for a festival worship service.

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Writing a “history” of any institution’s most recent years is difficult at best. Without the benefits of hindsight and consequence, when events have not yet coalesced into discernible trends, it can become a mere exercise in dating new facilities, tallying class sizes and student-faculty ratios, and naming the presidents and other leaders. The following paragraphs, then, are offered more as fodder for a future generation’s history than as a crown for this one.

President Ohle had presided over the Gustavus Sesquicentennial in 2012 and was able to announce the largest single gift in the College’s history, the creation of six new endowed faculty positions, and the College’s largest comprehensive fundraising program in its history, Campaign Gustavus (to be concluded by Homecoming 2015).

When Ohle announced his retirement effective with the end of the 2013–14 academic year, the Board of Trustees broke from tradition to hire as president the first woman in the College’s 152-year history. Rebecca Bergman, who had been a member of the Gustavus Board of Trustees 2007–2014, assumed the presidency after 26 years at Medtronic, Inc. Her leadership skills and priority for transparency, her ability to effectively communicate, and her knowledge of the College’s strengths and challenges made her uniquely qualified to lead Gustavus at a pivotal time in its history.

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In 1876, at the dedication of what is now known familiarly as Old Main, founder Eric Norelius made a confident prediction. “It will take time for its growth and development,” he said of the school on the hill overlooking St. Peter, “but I know the spirit of the people [who are] interested in it, and I cannot doubt that they will stick to it, love and encourage it, and make it a power of good.”

The author, Steve Waldhauser, is a 1970 graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College who returned to his alma mater in 1977. He recently retired from his position as director of editorial services and managing editor of the Gustavus Quarterly.

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