A PREHISTORY OF THE NEW ULM COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

Martin Luther College is a private liberal arts college in New Ulm, Minnesota. It exists to educate and train students for the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This paper offers an early history of Martin Luther College based on its essential relationship to New Ulm. Assembling the geography, sociology, and history of the city, this prehistory interprets the circumstances that gave rise to Dr. Martin Luther College, the campus of which now hosts its successor, Martin Luther College. The Lutherans who established the New Ulm college were shaped by their environment, a city designed and led by freethinkers of the local *Turnverein*. New Ulm, the *Turner* colony, inspired and even challenged its Lutherans to develop institutions competitive in significance with those of the *Turner*. The college arose from a vision to give God's Word a central, enduring place in New Ulm, the *Turnerstadt*.

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther College is a private liberal arts college in New Ulm, Minnesota. The college educates and trains students for the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It fulfills this purpose from its campus above New Ulm, a city set in the Minnesota Valley at the confluence of the Cottonwood and Minnesota Rivers.

In 1995, Martin Luther College emerged from the amalgamation of two institutions of similar yet distinct purposes. Northwestern College of Watertown, Wisconsin, was founded in 1865 by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Synod); Dr. Martin Luther College of New Ulm, Minnesota, was founded in 1884 by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota (Minnesota Synod). Each college trained both pastors and teachers until the synods entered a federation known as the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States in 1892. While retaining their organizational and administrative independence, the state synods cooperated in ministerial education. By 1893, Northwestern College became the federation's pre-seminary college; Dr. Martin Luther College its teachers' college.[1] They also shared Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary of Wauwatosa, which in 1929 moved to Mequon. In 1917, the synods merged to become the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

1. Both institutions hosted preparatory departments designed to matriculate students at either undergraduate college; Luther Preparatory School of Watertown, Wisconsin, is their successor. By 1910, Michigan Lutheran Seminary of Saginaw had become a preparatory school of the same purpose.

Because of its origin in amalgamation, Martin Luther College bears a rich, twofold history that continues as one from 1995. This paper investigates the history and identity the college enjoys by its inextricable relationship to New Ulm. To situate its institutional story, the following "prehistory" traces the origins of Dr. Martin Luther College, the campus of which now hosts Martin Luther College. Both institutions are properly considered "the New Ulm college."

Reconstructing the context of the college's development, the prehistory presents human geography, sociology, and history relevant to nineteenth-century New Ulm. This paper is informed in part by the *Annales* school, of twentieth-century French origin, which emphasizes long-term structures and mentalities (*longue durée*) over short-term events and individual decisions. The paper's research, informed by *Annales*, assumed that the origin of the New Ulm college, like all human activity, was conditioned by time and place. Hugh Redwald Trevor-Roper, an English historian and professor, summarized the *Annales* approach as an endeavor to "grasp the totality" of a historical period or society, appreciating the external forces that affect the "human vitality" at work within it. In an article published in the *Journal of Modern History* titled "Fernand Braudel, the *Annales*, and the Mediterranean," Trevor-Roper asserted that individual human thoughts are each the product of their environment:

> The thought which is thinkable in one time and one place is unthinkable in another, and the function of the historian, *quâ* historian, is not to declare that such a thought is objectively right or wrong (for historical terms are always relative, not absolute) but to state, or to suggest, what circumstances, in a particular time, make it thinkable.
>
> Geography, climate, population determine communications, economy, political organization, but each can react upon the other; man is a social animal and is conditioned by the society in which he lives, as that society in turn is conditioned by its geographical and climatic matrix; and politics and ideas are limited not only by these external forces but by the political and intellectual deposit around them, which was similarly determined, and into which they fall.[2]

2. H. R. Trevor-Roper, "Fernand Braudel, the Annales, and the Mediterranean," *Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 4 (December 1972): 469–70, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1876805.

The goal is therefore not only to create a chronicle of events and decisions that led to the establishment of Dr. Martin Luther College, but also to reflect on the broader circumstances that acted upon each other—in a particular time and place—to inspire the idea of the New Ulm college. The paper seeks to establish a fuller context of the college's origin. Archival material, primary sources, and secondary literature recovered the local forces that acted upon Friedrich Boock, a pioneer Lutheran of New Ulm who first proposed the college, and his congregation, who together championed the project.

This prehistory first examines the distinct human geography and social landscape of New Ulm, contextualizing the activity of its early Lutherans. It then chronicles their determined efforts to secure the college for New Ulm, culminating in the dedication of Dr. Martin Luther College. The story of the New Ulm college begins in its city.

NEW ULM

To understand New Ulm is to recognize its origins as the *Turnerstadt*, the singular colony of the German-American *Turnerbund*. While many other cities nationwide hosted *Turnvereine* (local *Turner* societies), their presence was incidental; in New Ulm, it was foundational. The college arose out of a city designed, built, and settled by *Turner*,[3] members of a nineteenth-century German physical culture and progressive freethought movement who dominated civic life.

Suffering political and ethnic persecution in the American East, the German immigrant freethinkers resolved to establish a new city free from nativist attack. In 1856, they discovered a picturesque site within the Minnesota Valley, in the heart of the Dakota (often referred to in nineteenth-century sources as "Sioux") homeland, newly opened to settlement, where they met a small group of Germans who had arrived the year before. Hundreds of *Turner* settlers soon joined the non-*Turner* settlers; together, they pioneered New Ulm.

The city itself arose out of an ideological design that placed the *Turnverein* at its geographic and philosophical center. This environment elevated the *Turner*, transforming the freethinkers from a persecuted immigrant group into an intellectual elite, a visionary ruling class that would lead the city through the war, plague, and disaster that punctuated the college's prehistory. As the *Turner* realized their *Turnerstadt*, the city's Lutherans, who would later establish the college, constituted a small congregation whose theology stood in direct opposition to the ideology of the city's freethinker establishment.

3. This paper will retain the German singular and plural noun "*Turner*" (literally, "gymnast[s]") and related terms (e.g., *Turnhalle*, *Turnerstadt*, *Turnverein*) to distinguish New Ulm's first generations of *Turner* from its present-day Turners, who are ideologically distinct from each other. "*Turner*" will also appear as an attributive noun (e.g., "a new city of *Turner* design") for stylistic ease. The English "Practical Turnerism" (*Praktische Turnerei*), used only a few times, is an exception made for readability.

Setting

New Ulm lies in southern Minnesota at the confluence of the Cottonwood and Minnesota Rivers. The Minnesota Valley defines the topography of the city, where it opens up to two miles wide and reaches depths of 250 feet. The Minnesota River meanders through this terrain, where New Ulm sits on a series of wide terraces that rise to the upland prairie landscape that otherwise dominates the region. On June 20, 1838, Joseph Nicollet, a French cartographer and explorer, passed through the future site of New Ulm, ascended its topography, and remarked on the location's natural beauty:

> We arrive on the most elevated plateau, the edge of which forms the crest that one takes for a chain of hills when one sees it from the banks of the Minnesota…. The plateau that opens here presents neither hills nor woods. It is a high, grand, and beautiful prairie…. The view to the south seems limitless, the verdure losing itself far away in the azure of the sky. The spectacle is full of grandeur because of its simplicity that contrasts agreeably with the varied and picturesque countryside the valley of the Minnesota presented to us.[4]

Charles Geyer, a German botanist on Nicollet's team, in a journal note that foreshadowed the German ethnic makeup of New Ulm's founders, wrote their view that day looked "very much like the scenery along the Rhine."[5]

New Ulm's river valley setting features a localized patchwork of ecosystems. Floodplain forests of silver maple, cottonwood, and willow cover the valley floors of the Cottonwood and Minnesota. Bur oak savannas dot river bluffs. Upland prairie of bluestems, Indian grass, and prairie wetlands of bluejoint grass, cattails, and sedges once stretched out above the city, though most of this land has been converted to farmland since the mid-nineteenth century. Waterfowl,

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4. Edmund C. Bray and Martha Coleman Bray, eds., *Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies: The Expeditions of 1838–39 with Journals, Letters, and Notes on the Dakota Indians*, trans. Edmund C. Bray and Martha Coleman Bray (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1976), 53–54.

5. Bray and Bray, *Nicollet*, 53n26; John R. Tester et al., *Minnesota's Natural Heritage: An Ecological Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 12–13.

bison, elk, and deer once inhabited the area in large numbers. Northern pike, walleye, sturgeon, paddlefish, and catfish filled the rivers, in which mussels and clams were abundant. The city's continental climate is characterized by warm, humid summers and cold, dry winters.[6]

For millennia, this environment has sustained the complex political, social, and cultural activity of numerous people groups. In *Southwestern Minnesota Archaeology: 12,000 Years in the Prairie Lake Region*, Scott Anfinson synthesized a century of local archaeological reports with twenty-five years of field experience. His work grounded New Ulm in a broader "Prairie Lake Region," whose archaeological, ecological, and geographical cohesiveness fostered distinct cultural traditions through its early human history. Jeffers Petroglyphs, located at a site roughly 30 miles southwest of New Ulm, testify to the complex social, spiritual, and cultural life of Indigenous communities ancient and modern. Here, on a high prairie ridge, Indigenous artists carved more than 5,000 images into exposed red quartzite bedrock, images archaeologists date from approximately 5000 BC to AD 1750. The petroglyphs depict deer, bison, turtles, weapons, thunderbirds, spirit beings, visions, and human figures to communicate a variety of messages; many appear to have served practical and educational purposes, displaying sophisticated knowledge of geometry, astronomy, geography, and medicine.[7]

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6. Tester, *Natural Heritage*, 24–26, 34–45; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Minnesota River Basin Reconnaissance Study: Section 905(b) Analysis (WRDA of 1986), Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Iowa* (December 2004), 9–10, https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/sites/eqb/files/documents/Minnesota%20River%20Reconnaisance%20Report%2012-8-04.pdf.

7. Scott F. Anfinson, *Southwestern Minnesota Archaeology: 12,000 Years in the Prairie Lake Region* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 1–2; Tom Sanders, "Jeffers Petroglyphs: A Recording of 7000 Years of North American History" (unpublished paper, Minnesota Historical Society, 2014), 42, 51, https://www.mnhs.org/hubfs/sites/default/files/jefferspetroglyphs/learn/archaeology/jeffers-petroglyphs-_history.pdf.

By the time Nicollet's expedition passed through the Minnesota Valley, the Dakota people controlled the region. Sleepy Eye, a Dakota chief over a village at present-day New Ulm,[8] hosted the explorers as his people harvested corn, prepared wild rice, and performed a ceremonial "grizely bear [*sic*]" dance. After spending two days in the village, known by the Dakota as *Maya Micaska* (Village of the Cut Bank),[9] the expedition continued south toward Lake Hanska. Determined to ensure their safe passage through potentially hostile Dakota territory, Sleepy Eye hurried to rejoin his European guests, a reunion that deeply moved Nicollet and his men:

> "My friend, I am glad to see you again," [Nicollet] said to him. [Sleepy Eye] replied, "You have left me sad…. I whom the fears of death, the wars, and the pains have never stopped. You are going to risk dangers. I waited for a horse to follow you, not being able to walk; the horse did not come in time. I mustered my forces. Here I am. I am not leaving you." He was sweating big drops, and the eloquence with which he pronounced these words moved us all. Here he is, then, with us.[10]

The westward expansion of the United States began to challenge Dakota control over southern Minnesota by the middle of the nineteenth century. A series of treaties, including the consequential 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, ceded roughly 24,000,000 acres to the United States government, opening the Minnesota Valley to American settlement. Following the 1851 treaty, the Dakota were confined to a reservation extending ten miles on either side of the Minnesota River, 140 miles from Lake Traverse to a line just west of New Ulm. The

8. Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 131. See fig. 1 for a depiction of Dakota life on the Minnesota River.

9. Westerman and White, *Mni Sota*, 131.

10. Bray and Bray, *Nicollet*, 115–17, 131.

reservation's proximity to New Ulm, which the Dakota called *Wakzupata* (Village-on-the-Cottonwood),[11] made the settlement vulnerable to attack during the Dakota War of 1862.[12]

In 1854, when the first German settlers of New Ulm (non-*Turner*) arrived in the Minnesota Valley to search for a townsite, Joseph LaFramboise, Jr., a fur trader and son-in-law of Sleepy Eye, guided them. Drawing on his thorough knowledge of the valley, he urged the Germans to settle on a stretch of land near the confluence of the Cottonwood and Minnesota Rivers. LaFramboise called this future site of New Ulm "Prairie Belle View," which was "the best damn spot for a town in all Minnesota Territory."[13] When Lutherans laid the cornerstone of the college in 1884—just thirty years later—Otto Hoyer, a pastor from St. Paul, marveled at the scenic splendor of its New Ulm location:

> New Ulm is picturesquely beautiful, located on four terraces or steps. The land donated to the synod is on the fourth terrace, sixteen acres of beautiful woods. In the midst of this closest to the city in cleared woods the foundation walls of the college were set up and the first floor already begun. It could not be otherwise than that all who set foot there for the first time felt astonished, both because of the glorious location of the building and because of the building itself which rises solidly and elegantly from the ground. Groups of people could be seen everywhere whose attention was caught now by this now by that, for which they expressed approval.[14]

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11. Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, eds., *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 154.

12. Westerman and White, *Mni Sota*, 134; Alice Felt Tyler, "William Pfaender and the Founding of New Ulm," *Minnesota History* 30, no. 1 (March 1949): 24–35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20175434.

13. Noel Iverson, *Germania, U.S.A.: Social Change in New Ulm, Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 57; Virginia Alwin, "The Early Years" (master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1946), 14.

14. Otto Hoyer, "Ecksteinlegung in New Ulm [Cornerstone Laying in New Ulm]," *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* 19, no. 22 (July 15, 1884): 172–73, translated by James Langebartels, in *Minnesota Synod Proceedings 1860–1885* (Self-published, 2026), 543, copy held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Mequon, WI. Hereafter, *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* is cited as *Gemeindeblatt*.

The Chicago Land Society

In 1854, the Chicago Land Society (*Chicago Landverein*), a group of German immigrants from Chicago (non-*Turner*), first began settling New Ulm. Under the leadership of Frederick Beinhorn, who before immigrating had envisioned a German colony in the United States, the group pooled its resources to fund the endeavor. These pioneers, who had already considered locations in northern Michigan and Iowa, were won over by LaFramboise's Prairie Belle View, a setting rich in natural resources, nestled in a widening of the valley with long plateaus rising "like the tiers of an enormous amphitheater."[15] After wintering nearby, in June 1855, the society preempted sixteen quarter sections of land with the assistance of Charles Flandrau, an American lawyer from Traverse des Sioux. The company named their settlement "New Ulm" because many members came from the region of the city of Ulm, Württemberg, in present-day Germany. Friedrich Boock, a German wagonbuilder who later envisioned the college, arrived in New Ulm as a member of the society in 1855.[16]

In early spring 1856, William Pfaender, an ambitious *Turner* from Cincinnati, joined them and commenced plans to transform the new settlement into the *Turnerstadt*.[17]

15. Iverson, *Germania*, 57–58.

16. Daniel John Hoisington, *A German Town: A History of New Ulm, Minnesota* (New Ulm, MN: The City of New Ulm, 2004), 2–7; "New Ulm Germans and the Chicago Land Society," n.d., Chicago Land Verein File (11-3), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN; "Christian Friedrich Boock Personal History," n.d., private collection of Paulette Boock Hultgren, Bloomington, MN; Tyler, "Founding of New Ulm," 30–33. The Chicago Land Society brought several dozen settlers to New Ulm before the *Turner* arrived.

17. Hoisington, *German Town*, 7.

The *Turner*

The *Turner* (literally, "gymnasts") were members of a German progressive freethought movement that combined physical fitness with intellectual activity to encourage political engagement. Committed to developing the whole person, they adopted the motto *mens sana in corpore sano* ("sound mind in a sound body"), an ancient axiom formulated by the Roman author Juvenal. In 1811, Friederich Ludwig Jahn organized the first *Turnverein* (literally, "gymnastics society") in Berlin. Jahn, resenting Napoleon's occupation of the German states, aimed to train young men who could bring about liberal democracy in a strong, unified Germany. In *The Forty-eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, Augustus Prahl, a professor of German language and history, described the *Turner* program as an endeavor to "strengthen and liberalize German youth" by combining "the practice of physical training with the inculcation of ideals of a free and self-respecting citizenship."[18] By the middle of the nineteenth century, *Turnvereine* had spread throughout Germany and organized large memberships of active and politically conscious young men, many of whom were university students.[19]

Following the collapse of the liberal democratic 1848 German Revolution, many *Turner* became political refugees and fled to the United States. *Turnvereine* soon appeared in American cities nationwide—from New York to Los Angeles, from New Orleans to Watertown, Wisconsin—and federated as the *Nordamerikanischer Turnerbund*. Reestablishing their purpose in the United States, the *Turner* immigrants dedicated themselves to the "cultivation of rational

18. Augustus J. Prahl, "The Turner," in *The Forty-eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. A.E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 79–80.

19. Prahl, "The Turner," 79–80; Hoisington, *German Town*, 70. See figs. 10–12 for photographs of various New Ulm *Turner* involved in physical training.

training, both intellectual and physical, in order that the members may become energetic, patriotic citizens of the Republic, who could and would represent and protect common human liberty by word and deed."[20] William Pfaender, born on July 6, 1826, in Heilbronn, Württemberg, was one such immigrant. After helping found the *Turnverein* in his hometown and later becoming active among the *Turner* in Ulm, in 1848 Pfaender moved to the United States, settled in Cincinnati, and there helped establish the first American *Turnverein*.[21]

The social, cultural, and philosophical traits of the *Turner* provoked opposition and persecution from many Americans. The *Turner* were liberal freethinkers, rational humanists who offended their church-going neighbors by espousing agnosticism and openly opposing—and often disregarding—Sabbatarian ordinances. Eschewing church, their social lives centered around German music, German theatre, and their *Turnhallen* (multi-purpose halls home to *Turnvereine*), which became infamous among mainstream Americans as centers of radical political and social thought. The *Turner* advocated socialism, opposed slavery and prohibition, and resisted the nativism of the nineteenth-century Know-Nothing movement. Idealizing nature, the freethinkers organized group excursions into forests or open fields where they enjoyed picnics, gymnastic exhibitions, and choir performances, a peculiar practice that raised the suspicions of outsiders.[22] Opposition turned violent when nativist mobs began harassing the

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20. Prahl, "The Turner," 93.

21. Prahl, "The Turner," 71, 92. See fig. 3 for a portrait of William Pfaender.

22. Prahl's description of the *Turner* included a primary source report on one such picnic of the Boston *Turnverein* written by the group's secretary. In Boston's Jamaica Plain, the freethinkers enjoyed a "celebration of spring and a festival of brotherhood" that featured gymnastics, singing, and orations by guest speakers. The secretary's description of nature illustrated the freethinkers' romanticization of it:

> What impression the blue ether and the glorious sun shining through the tips of the oak trees made upon me, what memories and what hopes crossed my mind at the sight of the charming green of the forest only a German heart can fathom. With the same pleasure I viewed the company in whose faces gay happiness was mirrored (Prahl, "The Turner," 97).

Turner and other German immigrants. In April 1855, following earlier attacks in other eastern cities, a Know-Nothing mob entered the German "Over-the-Rhine" district in Cincinnati and began smashing windows and assaulting immigrants on the street. The violence approached the local *Turnhalle*, where the freethinkers stood heavily armed. As the assailants closed in, the *Turner* fired, killing one man and wounding dozens. The attackers fled.[23]

Some, incensed by the violence, called for heightened self-defense measures and urged more *Turner* to take up arms. William Pfaender put forth a different solution. Advocating a course that would reset the foundations of New Ulm, he urged the development of a new *Turner* colony—a sanctuary of freethought undisturbed by nativist persecution.[24]

Practical Turnerism

In an article published March 29, 1855, in *Die Turnzeitung*, the newspaper of the national *Turnerbund*, titled "Practical Turnerism" (*Praktische Turnerei*, literally, "Practical Gymnastics"), William Pfaender proposed the development of a *Turner* colony in the west. He argued that, instead of battling nativist mobs in established cities, the *Turnvereine* would better spend their collective energy by creating a new city of *Turner* design. The colony would provide the freethinkers a "secure existence," guaranteeing their United States constitutional rights to "enjoy life without limit, and after our own fashion to become happy and blessed." His plans assumed that 1,000 *Turner* would participate in the colonization effort:

23. Hildegard Binder Johnson, "Adjustment to the United States," in *The Forty-eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. A.E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 55; Prahl, "The Turner," 93–99; Hoisington, *German Town*, 9–11.

24. Hoisington, *German Town*, 11.

> The Turners have already produced so many beneficial results in this land, that one has good reason to expect that they will now take another step to secure a practical result of their striving, and thereby offer proof that their attempts at reform are in earnest. Until now we have limited this to building up the physical and mental strengths of capable men, but now the time appears to have come when we must consider creating for these men an organization which stands in accord with our current efforts, and here a field is opened to us which requires only vigorous hands, but which until now has never been considered, even though we daily see hundreds exerting themselves in order to attain what could be achieved with much less effort as a group: a secure existence.
>
> The continual expansion of our union, the daily emergence of prejudice under the conceit of native born Americans, the fact that our Turnverein consists mostly of members who are capable of carrying out a large undertaking with energy and perseverance, has quickly brought to my mind whether people of varying strengths will not unite to establish a separate settlement, which in addition to material well-being also presents the advantage that the mad, unworthy attempts at killing by our Anglo-American disciplinarians cannot limit us, that we with one word through the rights guarantees to us by the United States Constitution have occasion to enjoy life without limit, and after our own fashion to become happy and blessed.
>
> This project is in its expressed outline about as follows: the society has as its purpose, in a neighborhood in the west to be determined later, in proportion to available capital, to acquire a stretch of land of which part would be laid out as a city, the remainder partly as a reserve, and partly as farmland for those to be determined, who prefer agricultural operations to ownership in the city.
>
> If we assume a membership of 1,000, and set the price of a share of stock at a mere ten dollars, this will give capital of ten thousand dollars, with which a good-looking parcel of land could be purchased, while the risk to each participant would amount to so little that each one would have the opportunity to acquire a homestead; once the thing is in operation, hundreds would certainly be ready within a few years to go to the place of settlement, and the settlement must soon be blooming heartily.[25]

Pfaender and his compatriot Jacob Nix presented the vision of Practical Turnerism to the 1855 national *Turnerbund* convention in Buffalo, New York, where it met widespread approval. The convention named Pfaender president of a new *Turner* colonization society,[26] which quickly

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25. William Pfaender, "Praktische Turnerei," *Die Turnzeitung*, 29 March 1855, translated and reprinted in *William Pfaender and the German American Experience*, ed. Grady Steele Parker (Roseville, MN: Edinborough Press, 2004), 73–75.

26. Because the society bore at least a couple of names throughout its short history—including the "Turner Colonization Society of Cincinnati" and the "Settlement Association of the Socialist Turner Society"—this paper refers to it simply as the "*Turner* colonization society."

grew to 1,300 members, most from Cincinnati but also from cities such as Cleveland, Chicago, and Buffalo.[27]

After exploring several sites, Pfaender and a small team traveled to St. Paul, where they learned of a newly founded German settlement along the banks of the upper Minnesota River: New Ulm. When the *Turner* delegation came to the townsite, the two settlement societies joined forces, incorporating as the German Land Association on March 4, 1857, with Pfaender as president. Under the negotiated terms of agreement, the *Turner* purchased additional land for New Ulm and built a community sawmill, warehouse, and flourmill, while the Chicago group sold their holdings to the *Turner*. In "William Pfaender and the Founding of New Ulm," a paper presented to the American Historical Association in Washington, D.C., Alice Felt Tyler, a professor of history, noted the difficult frontier circumstances of New Ulm at the time of the merger and the catalytic influx of *Turner* settlers that followed:

> When the merger of the two associations was made, the village consisted of twenty-three log houses scattered over a three-mile area, and one store, the entire stock of which consisted of thirty pounds of coffee, fifty pounds of sugar, three bolts of cotton goods, and half barrel of whisky! Many of the thirteen hundred Cincinnati members migrated, however, and by 1860 the population of the township was 653, almost all Germans and their American-born children.[28]

As the *Turner* began colonizing the valley, they established not only the social and cultural identity of the settlement but also its physical design. In "Territorial Space: Platting New Ulm," Dennis Gimmestad, an architectural historian, gave commentary to the 1858 city plan by *Turner* Christian Prignitz. Applying Practical Turnerism to the urban environment, Prignitz advanced the freethinkers' goal to "establish a town with a defined philosophical, economic, and

27. Tyler, "Founding of New Ulm," 32; Hoisington, *German Town*, 11–12.

28. Tyler, "Founding of New Ulm," 32; Hoisington, *German Town*, 12–13.

social character."[29] The plan, which has guided New Ulm's development to the present,[30] emphasized order, symmetry, and equality. Along its valley terraces, Prignitz oriented New Ulm parallel to the Minnesota River, platting a far-sighted 40-by-10-block street grid. Each block was divided into seven uniform lots, arranged to provide space for an alley, a stable, and a small house.[31]

This *Turner* example of urbanism also reflected their idealization of nature. North German Park and South German Park, each six blocks long and two blocks wide, combined below Minnesota Street as a central landscape reserve; North Park and South Park anchored the city at its northern and southern limits.[32] In an extraordinary provision, the plan also offered each member of the German Land Association a four-acre garden outlot, hundreds of which surrounded the city proper.[33]

The Prignitz plan prepared New Ulm to emerge as a distinctly *Turner* place, a tailored environment that uniquely manifested their ideology.[34] The *Turnerstadt* would be a safe haven, a

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29. Dennis Gimmestad, "Territorial Space: Platting New Ulm," *Minnesota History* 56, no. 6 (1999): 350. The Chicago Land Society had already created a plat for New Ulm, but had not built on it. The *Turner* fully redesigned the city on their terms (Iverson, *Germania*, 60). See fig. 4 for a copy of the 1858 *Turner* plan.

30. City of New Ulm, *New Ulm Comprehensive Plan* (New Ulm, MN: City of New Ulm, June 2024), 13, 36, 47, 51, 87. See "Strategy 2.4" in the Land Use section, which proposes that the city "Improve and strengthen community character and sense of place in new development by incorporating elements from the development of the original New Ulm plat" (*New Ulm Comprehensive Plan*, 51).

31. Gimmestad, "Platting New Ulm," 346; Hoisington, *German Town*, 14–15; David A. Lanegran, *Minnesota on the Map: A Historical Atlas* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), 96–99.

32. The plan also included several market squares, two of which later became the city's Washington and Lincoln Parks.

33. Gimmestad, "Platting New Ulm," 347–50; Hoisington, *German Town*, 14–15; Lanegran, *Minnesota on the Map*, 96–99.

34. In *Minnesota on the Map*, David Lanegran, a Minnesota geographer and professor, introduced his section on New Ulm's *Turner* design by emphasizing its singularity: "Minnesota has only one community, New Ulm, that was founded upon utopian community ideals, and its story is unique" (Lanegran, *Minnesota on the Map*, 96).

"secure existence" for the hundreds of freethinkers who soon followed Pfaender to settle the Minnesota Valley. Even city streets were named to honor leading American freethinkers and Enlightenment figures: Payne,[35] Jefferson, Franklin, Washington. The intention given to the city's design was—and is—unmistakable.[36] At the heart of New Ulm, the *Turner* enshrined the institutions most central to their ideal: school, government, *Turnverein*.[37]

The Dakota War of 1862

On August 19 and 23, 1862, Dakota warriors attacked the settlement in the First and Second Battles of New Ulm, early in the Dakota War of 1862. The causes and consequences of the war, which ended with the mass execution of thirty-eight Dakota men in Mankato and the forced removal of the Dakota people from Minnesota by the United States government, are complex and varied. This paper will attempt only to offer a summary of local events, providing a brief impression of the traumatic violence New Ulm and its earliest Lutherans endured.

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35. New Ulm's "Payne Street" was named after Thomas Paine, the American revolutionary.

36. Gimmestad, writing in 1999, noted the enduring legacy of New Ulm's foundational urbanism:

> Today's visitors to New Ulm often comment on the city's neat appearance and distinctive character. While scores of the lots originally intended as four-acre gardens have been lost to new schools, housing, and other developments, the original plat's parks, avenues, and building lots survive. Walking the streets of the Turners' city plan, one can subtly, but ever so surely, gain a very real sense of the territorial ideology that birthed a city (Gimmestad, "Platting New Ulm," 350).

37. Lanegran, *Minnesota on the Map*, 96–99; Hoisington, *German Town*, 14–15. Gimmestad, referencing an address to the Brown County Historical Society by Rainier Vollmar, a German geographer, noted the significance of the *Turnhalle*'s placement:

> [Vollmar] saw the Turner ideal of equality embodied in the symmetry and similar lot sizes of the plat. He also noted the significance of siting Turner Hall immediately adjacent to the central blocks dedicated to the county courthouse and the school. That building is clearly visible in an early view of the city that is notably devoid of church buildings (Gimmestad, "Platting New Ulm," 350; see fig. 5 for an 1860 view of New Ulm that includes New Ulm's first *Turnhalle*).

By the summer of 1862, corruption among United States Indian agents at the Upper and Lower Sioux Reservations—just west of New Ulm—had become chronic, with officials routinely siphoning critical annuity payments promised to the Dakota by the United States government. The costly Civil War worsened the situation, and annuities began arriving late. In 1862, the Dakota—further frustrated by restrictions on their historic hunting grounds and pressure to conform to mainstream American culture—had just survived a harsh winter in which many had starved. In a resurgence of traditionalist Dakota warfare, a faction of young warriors resolved to secure their future by purging the Minnesota Valley region of European-American settlement. By the end of the conflict, more than twenty Minnesota counties saw violence, with the greatest loss of life occurring in Renville County and Brown County (New Ulm).[38]

On August 18, 1862, a small band of Dakota warriors massacred over fifty settlers on farms in Milford Township, directly between New Ulm and the Lower Sioux Reservation. Among those dead were four members of a Civil War recruiting party, whose survivors fled to New Ulm to alert its people. In *Massacre in Minnesota: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American History*, Gary Anderson, a historian of Native American history and expert on the Dakota War, described the brutal violence that shocked *Turner* Charles Roos, sheriff of Brown County, when he and his team reported to the scene:

> Sheriff Roos, still convinced that the war party was only a group of "drunken Indians," armed a posse that left for Milford in the early afternoon. The group soon discovered dozens of victims and a handful of children who managed to flee the tomahawks and hid in sloughs. Mrs. Henle also came out of hiding. As the posse entered Milford Township, they saw nothing but burning houses and haystacks and slaughtered cattle. Most of the dead had been tomahawked to death, as the Indians early on had few firearms. While

38. Gary Clayton Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 73–77; Darla Cordes Gebhard and John Isch, *Eight Days in August: The Accounts of the Casualties and Survivors in Brown County during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862* (New Ulm, MN: Brown County Historical Society, 2012), 14; Kenneth Carney, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862*, 2nd ed. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1976), 21–22.

> hardly any had been scalped, a few had been beheaded, and the condition of the children who survived tomahawk attacks brought grown men to tears. One little girl "was cut across the face, breasts, and side." Another boy "was dreadfully cut up." A child's body had been recovered that had "its head cut off and sixteen other gashes upon its person." Many of the victims brought in had severed heads as a result of their throats being cut. The killing had left pools of blood.[39]

The founders of New Ulm, aware that the Dakota would soon surround the settlement, elected *Turner* Jacob Nix, an officer during the 1848 German Revolution, to organize the city's defense. He took command of a team of volunteers—only twelve of whom had rifles—and ordered men to build barricades around three blocks of Minnesota Street, the downtown. On August 19, 1862, one hundred Dakota descended upon the *Turnerstadt*. Nix and his men kept the assailants at bay until a thunderstorm and the arrival of reinforcements from St. Peter ended the fight. Six settlers had died, including thirteen-year-old Emilie Pauli, who tried to cross the street in the middle of the engagement. Eleven more men were killed just outside of New Ulm when the Dakota ambushed a rescue expedition returning from nearby Leavenworth Township.[40]

Refugees from the countryside began flooding into New Ulm, which soon held about 2,000 settlers behind the downtown barricades. During the Second Battle of New Ulm, on August 23, 1862, hundreds of women and children huddled in a hotel, where the defenders—fearing the worst—had placed in its basement barrels of gunpowder. Mary Schmitz Ryan, a pregnant twenty-six-year-old mother of two, agreed to ignite the powder if the enemy took the city. Charles Flandrau, now commander of the strengthened defense, later recounted the anxious dread he could "never forget" as roughly 650 Dakota "sailed down on us like the wind" bent on the annihilation of New Ulm:

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39. Anderson, *Massacre*, 96–97; Carney, *Sioux Uprising*, 21–22.

40. Anderson, *Massacre*, 103; Carney, *Sioux Uprising*, 35; Gebhard and Isch, *Eight Days*, 15.

> As soon as the intentions of the Indians became apparent, I determined to form my men on the open prairie on the second and highest plateau of land and meet them there when they came down, feeling assured that the river lying between the town and those on the other side, would protect us on that side, and could plainly see that the main body of the enemy was on our side of the river.… None of them had ever been under fire in a regular way; the Situation was trying in the extreme and very much augmented by the knowledge of the inferior character of their arms.… [The Dakota] came in a close mass, at a moderate gate [*sic*] until they were within about double rifle shot from us, when they deployed to the right and left until they had covered our whole front, and then gave a blood curdling yell, and Sailed down on us like the wind.… I shall never forget the anxiety I felt as to the result of the charge upon our men. It seemed to me that to fall back was certain destruction, as the Indians would rush into the town, fire it and Slaughter the entire population.[41]

Against a siege that lasted until the next morning, Flandrau and his men successfully defended the city with efforts that included a daring charge down Minnesota Street to "drive the enemy out of the lower town or die trying."[42] Nearly 200 buildings—most of the settlement—had been destroyed,[43] and twenty-six of Flandrau's men were killed with seventy more wounded. By the end of the war, hundreds of settlers, if not a couple thousand, had been massacred

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41. Charles E. Flandrau, "The Battle of New Ulm," in *Charles E. Flandrau and the Defense of New Ulm*, ed. Russell W. Fridley, Leota M. Kellett, and June D. Holmquist (New Ulm, MN: Brown County Historical Society, 1962), 40–41; Gebhard and Isch, *Eight Days*, 15; Anderson, *Massacre*, 151–52. See fig. 6 for a painting by Anton Gág of New Ulm under attack by the Dakota. See fig. 9 for a photograph of Minnesota Street in 1871, nine years after the war.

42. Flandrau, "The Battle of New Ulm," 46.

43. Standing amid the destruction, Flandrau decided to evacuate New Ulm. Anderson related the scheme of several departing settlers and the generally desperate situation of the war refugees:

> Some 153 wagons headed south, down Minnesota Street, crossing the Cottonwood River on their way to Mankato. In leaving, some of the townspeople brought out bottles of strychnine and laced several barrels of whiskey with it, hoping that the new occupants—Indians—would take the bait. (The strychnine was on hand for poisoning wolves.) Flandrau, seemingly appalled, broke the barrels. With this parting gesture, the exodus from New Ulm got underway. The caravan reached St. Peter on August 27. Flandrau could only lament the situation: "It was a melancholy spectacle to see two thousand people, who a few days before had been prosperous and happy, reduced to utter beggary." Albert Knight, who had been designated to help with refugees in St. Peter, was aghast at their arrival. There were three thousand refugees in town already, and the "procession that arrived from New Ulm was nearly four miles long." They were all hungry, tired, and lame, and Knight could not help them, even with the bare necessities of life (Anderson, *Massacre*, 155).

statewide.[44] In *Eight Days in August: The Accounts of the Casualties and Survivors in Brown County during the U.S. Dakota War of 1862*, historians Darla Gebhard and John Isch underscored the proportionally significant loss of life Brown County experienced:

> The total number of deaths is large, but comparing those deaths to a similar rate for today explains the panic that the settlers experienced in 1862. The 123 deaths in Brown County in 1862 were about 4 percent of the population of the county. A similar death rate [in Brown County] today would be 1000 casualties.[45]

The Dakota War devastated southern Minnesota. Around 30,000 settlers fled the region because of its often-horrific violence, never to return.[46] New Ulm remained.

The *Turnerstadt*

After an evacuation of New Ulm that sent refugees to cities including Mankato, St. Peter, and St. Paul, settlers returned weeks later to rebuild. Jacob Nix remembered the settlement's reconstruction as an efficient, orderly process, one that advanced when the city received federal

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44. Historians Darla Gebhard and John Isch explained the difficulty of assembling an accurate count of settler casualties of the Dakota War:

> Sometimes the number of casualties was inflated for political or emotional effect. Newspapers in the Midwest tended to overstate the deaths to support their demand for the extermination or exile of the Indians. There is a tendency currently to downplay the number of casualties. Perhaps because of the uncertainty of the total, a number of books do not include any number. Over the years the total number has varied from 300 to 2000 (Gebhard and Isch, *Eight Days*, 6).

45. Gebhard and Isch, *Eight Days*, 10. Gebhard and Isch wrote in 2012; Anderson, *Massacre*, 153.

46. Gebhard and Isch, *Eight Days*, 10; Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography*, ed. Pamela Smith Hill (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2014), 62–64. Years later, the abandoned ruins of settler homes remained visible reminders of the war. During her childhood, author Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family passed through New Ulm as they moved west to Walnut Grove, the setting of her work *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. In *Pioneer Girl: the Annotated Autobiography*, Wilder recalled their 1874 stop in the city. There, her father, Charles Ingalls, filed a preemption claim for their new Plum Creek property at the federal land office, and the family visited a *Biergarten*, which likely served beer from the August Schell Brewing Company. West of New Ulm, the family came upon "some grassy mounds that Pa said were ruins of houses where Indians had killed the settlers in an Indian masacree [*sic*] years before" (Wilder, *Pioneer Girl*, 62–64, 63n12, 65n14).

compensation for Dakota War losses. Within a few years, the survivors had resurrected New Ulm, their "Phoenix out of the ashes," the *Turnerstadt*:

> Day after day people returned and soon again a busy life was astir in the town. Those who returned occupied the vacant houses. The main and side streets were cleaned and everything put in as good order as possible. Three weeks later nothing was to be seen of the struggle which had been waged here, only the ashes and ruins of the burnt buildings were there as mute evidence. These also were almost all rebuilt in the following year, after payment for the reimbursements by the United States government.
>
> New buildings were erected also. A few years later traces of the catastrophe were completely erased. The Turner City of New Ulm recovered hale and happy, strong and faithful. It had again arisen, like Phoenix out of the ashes.[47]

The *Turner* quickly resumed their initial dominance over civic life and maintained it beyond the prehistory of the New Ulm college, founded 1884. In *Germania, U.S.A.: Social Change in New Ulm, Minnesota*, Noel Iverson offered a sociological analysis of the "dramatic social transformation" of the *Turner*, who from their arrival in New Ulm changed "in the space of a few years… from talented ethnic leaders to an Americanized status elite."[48] His study demonstrated that *Turner* influence climaxed in the 1890s, when the freethinkers maintained their hegemony over New Ulm's intellectual and cultural life despite the emergence of local religious communities.[49]

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47. Jacob Nix, "The Return to New Ulm," in *Charles E. Flandrau and the Defense of New Ulm*, ed. Russell W. Fridley, Leota M. Kellett, and June D. Holmquist (New Ulm, MN: Brown County Historical Society, 1962), 58.

48. Iverson, *Germania*, 6. *Germania, U.S.A.* studied the unusual sociological progression of the *Turner* and their descendants from their history as a talented but marginalized German immigrant community in the east to their intellectual elite status in New Ulm (Iverson's "Germania"), peaking in the 1890s; it also examined their waning influence still evident in the city during the 1960s. Iverson's work developed two sociological hypotheses:

> I. The Germania Turners' marketable talents gave them partial acceptance in America; but in spite of these assets their historical marginality and foreign culture at first forced them into the form of an ethnic community. II. Their superior social and cultural experience, however, when applied to frontier conditions, enabled them to get control of the key positions of influence, prestige, and wealth in Germania. They subsequently emerged in their new form as a status elite (Iverson, *Germania*, 16).

49. Iverson, *Germania*, 105–6, 132.

New Ulm's population grew steadily following the Dakota War: 635 in 1860; 1,310 in 1870; 2,471 in 1880; 3,741 in 1890.[50] The growth is largely due to the arrival of non-*Turner* German, and later also German-Bohemian,[51] immigrants, who began to outnumber the *Turner* founders.[52] Iverson recognized the advantage the *Turner* gained in welcoming lower-status outsiders, a practice necessary to become a ruling "status community," an intellectual class free from menial labor. With this elevated status, they could fully exploit their "original superior social and cultural position" in New Ulm, which Iverson referred to as "Germania" throughout his work:

> It was to the advantage of the Turners, as the founding elite, to invite anybody of low status into Germania. Only by becoming a status community could they full exploit their original superior social and cultural position in Germania. If, on the other hand, the

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50. Below are population figures for New Ulm, Brown County, and Nicollet County (across the Minnesota River from New Ulm). New Ulm: 635 (1860), 1,310 (1870), 2,471 (1880), 3,741 (1890); Brown County: 2,258 (1860), 6,396 (1870), 12,018 (1880), 15,817 (1890); Nicollet County: 3,712 (1860), 8,362 (1870), 12,333 (1880), 13,382 (1890). U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior, by Joseph C.G. Kennedy, Superintendent of Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), table 1, 251 (Brown County; Nicollet County); table 3, 255 (New Ulm); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . . Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870,) under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior, by Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of Census*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), table II, 40 (Brown County; Nicollet County); table III, 177 (New Ulm); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880) . . .* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1883), table II, 66 (Brown County; Nicollet County); table III, 224 (New Ulm); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1895), table 4, 26 (Brown County; Nicollet County); table 5, 195 (New Ulm).

51. Artists Anton Gág (1858–1908) and his daughter Wanda Gág (1893–1946) were members of New Ulm's German-Bohemian community, which largely settled in the city's riverside Goosetown neighborhood (*Ganseviertel*); the Gág family made their home above the downtown, near St. Paul's church. Wanda Gág, writing from her rural New Jersey farm residence and studio "All Creation," reflected on her New Ulm childhood among the *Turner* in the introduction to her published diary *Growing Pains: Diaries and Drawings for the Years 1908–1917* (1940; repr., St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), xxx:

> I was born in this country, but I often feel as though I had spent my early years in Europe. My father was born in Bohemia, as were my mother's parents. My birthplace—New Ulm, Minnesota—was settled by Middle-Europeans, and I grew up in an atmosphere of Old World customs and legends, of Bavarian and Bohemian folk songs, of German *Märchen* and *Turnverein* activities. I spoke no English until I went to school.

52. Iverson, *Germania*, 142. It is difficult to determine precisely what proportion of New Ulm's population was *Turner*, as many settlers made their homes outside city limits, which complicates census data. The *Turner* colonization society comprised roughly 1,300 members, though not all relocated to the colony.

> Turners had remained an exclusive German ethnic community [unto themselves], some of them would eventually have had to take menial jobs; as members of an ethnic community, not all could enjoy equally the privileges of high status. By letting in people of lower status, and by forming themselves into a status community, the Turners were able to control Germania's prestigeful and powerful positions.[53]

The *Turner* leveraged their superior education, financial situation, and social and cultural capital to assume leadership positions across every area of civic life.[54] Iverson illustrated the comprehensive dominance of the freethinkers by listing a sample of roles they held in New Ulm and elsewhere:

> They drafted a city charter, organized a school system, commanded the defense of the town during the Sioux uprising, and installed their members as president, justice of peace, mayor, city clerk, treasurer, city attorney, city engineer, city councilman, and in numerous other offices. Turners became prominent in the medical and legal professions. They saw several of their friends and members elected to state office: secretary of state, treasurer, senator, and representative. The founder of Germania, William Pfaender, was one of the first presidential electors from the state of Minnesota. Horace Austin, active in the defense of Germania in 1862, became governor of Minnesota, serving from 1870 to 1874.[55]

Their *Turnhalle*, at the geographic center of New Ulm, also became its social, educational, political, and intellectual center:

> [In the nineteenth century] the Turners were recognized as the cultural and intellectual leaders of the community; when plays and operas were performed by European artists on the stage of their Turner Hall; when dances, banquets, lectures and concerts, school instruction, public meetings, law sessions, and gymnastic festivals—all held at the Turner Hall—occupied much of their leisure.[56]

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53. Iverson, *Germania*, 17.

54. Iverson, *Germania*, iii, 16.

55. Iverson, *Germania*, 141–42.

56. Iverson, *Germania*, 105–6. See fig. 13 for a photograph of New Ulm *Turner* gathered in their *Rathskeller* (basement-level meeting room).

In *A German Town: A History of New Ulm, Minnesota*, commissioned for the city's sesquicentennial, historian Daniel Hoisington celebrated the outsized cultural activity of the New Ulm *Turnverein*, which humbled a Minneapolis observer in 1885:

> As always, Turner Hall stood at the center of the social and cultural life of the community, hosting an array of classes, lectures, concerts, plays, and seasonal festivals. The Turners took special pride in the Turning-school, or gymnastics program, directed by Carl Gebser and Hugo Fischer.
>
> One local production of a popular German play, *Der Raub der Sabinerinnen*, proved such a success at Turner Hall that the troupe took it on the road to the West Side Turner Hall in Minneapolis and the Saint Paul Athenaum. It was a smash. "Their community stands first among all the German cities of the country," trumpeted the Minneapolis *Freie Presse*. "This achievement makes us say that we people in cities of 10 to 40,000 Germans ought to exclaim: 'God have mercy on our souls.'" The triumph was shortly followed by the tragedy, *Der Student von Ulm*, based on the medieval history of the German city. Hundreds were turned away from Turner Hall.[57]

In 1884, the New Ulm college arose out of a city that fully embodied the *Turner* ideal. A living monument to Practical Turnerism, New Ulm—the "first among all the German cities of the country"—was a city designed, built, and dominated by freethinkers: the *Turnerstadt*.

57. Hoisington, *German Town*, 76–77.

THE LUTHERANS

New Ulm shaped its Lutherans, who first arrived with the Chicago Land Society. Those who organized the city's Lutheran congregation (1865) and championed the New Ulm college (1884) formed a congregation within a context uniquely dominated by *Turner*. In service to Practical Turnerism, purposeful parks, neighborhoods, and gardens harnessed the aesthetic values and natural resources of the Minnesota Valley. Lutherans sent their children to schools endowed, led, and staffed by humanist freethinkers. An intellectual, socio-economic elite, the *Turner* wrote policy and drove the economy; they expected—and then delivered—social and cultural amenities that were considered decadent by the standards of American frontier life. The Lutherans emerged in a New Ulm where the *Turner* led city hall, officiated marriages, sponsored the arts, taught freethought Sunday school, hosted lectures, wrote progressive newspapers, and gathered in their *Turnhalle* for lively debate over the beer of *Turner* brewers. The ideology of the city's freethinker ruling class influenced nearly every aspect of civic life, inevitably shaping a Lutheran experience unique to New Ulm.

The destruction wrought by the Dakota War gave the people of New Ulm a chance to reenvision their city in its reconstruction. Through two battles, the settlers—both *Turner* and Lutheran—became citizens who had not only founded and inhabited New Ulm but also fought for it and preserved it. The *Turner* quickly reestablished the *Turnerstadt*, rebuilding the *Turnhalle* at the center of New Ulm and resuming their dominant role in civic life. Then, in the home of Friedrich Boock, the Lutherans established themselves, too.

They founded a congregation and named it for *St. Paulus*, missionary to Gentile nations.

The Formation of St. Paul's

On July 30, 1865, a small group of Lutherans gathered in the home of Friedrich Boock to organize a congregation and make plans to construct a church.[58] The *St. Paulus-Gemeinde* (St. Paul's),[59] which envisioned and championed the New Ulm college less than twenty years later, developed under the religious antagonism of the *Turner*, the locust plague (1873–77) and the tornado (1881) that New Ulm suffered, and the theological guidance of the Minnesota Synod.

The *Turner* and Religious Antagonism

The unlikely presence of a Lutheran congregation in the post-war *Turnerstadt* soon caught the attention of the Wisconsin Synod. Founded in 1865, the New Ulm church began hosting mission festivals early in its history. The Wisconsin Synod *Gemeindeblatt* reported in 1867:

> Mission festivals are not uncommon today. Nevertheless, a well-attended mission festival in the *Turner-Kolonie* of New Ulm, held at the same time as the large *Turner* festival of all *Turnvereine* in Minneapolis, Minnesota, will be unfamiliar to many readers.... On August 23, 1862, the blood of many citizens of New Ulm flowed on this hill, where three churches now stand in battle formation against ancient and modern heathendom.[60]

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58. "Articles of Incorporation of the Ev. Luth.-Reformierte St. Paulus-Gemeinde in New Ulm, Minnesota," 22 August 1865, St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN; "New Ulm Germans and the Chicago Land Society," n.d., Chicago Land Verein File (11-3), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. St. Paul's charter membership included many original settlers of New Ulm. Cross-referencing a list of St. Paul's charter members against the membership roster of the Chicago Land Society shows that men including Friedrich Boock, Jacob Brust, Carl Fritsche, August Hellmann, Johann Junker, R.C. Kiesling, Johann Meyer, H. Mueller, Friedrich Rehfeld, Adolph Schilling, and John Stark helped establish both New Ulm and its Lutheran congregation.

59. The possessive form reflects the congregation's current self-identification.

60. "Ein Missionsfest in Neu-Ulm im Staate Minnesota," *Gemeindeblatt* 3, no. 5 (1 November 1867): 2, http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4381. Translation by author; unless otherwise noted, all subsequent translations are my own. The hill is that above downtown New Ulm, where Dakota War fighting had occurred. The three churches refer to the Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist churches along North State Street. The Catholic church, under construction, was dedicated in 1870. The Methodist church was dedicated in 1866. The Catholic and Methodist congregations had both lost unfinished church buildings to the Dakota War.

The charge of "modern heathendom" reflected the notoriety New Ulm had developed among outsiders. For many, the city was synonymous with the outspoken anticlericalism and agnosticism of the *Turner*. These stances were typical of *Turnverein* members across the United States, reinforcing outsider stereotypes of *Turnerstadt* New Ulm.[61] In *The Forty-eighters*, Hildegard Binder Johnson interpreted the anti-church posture of the *Turner* as a response to the religious landscape of nineteenth-century Germany: "Largely because of the reactionary attitude of the German state church, the *Turner* and the Forty-eighters in general had become anticlericals, freethinkers of the aggressive sort who set up free schools in opposition to parochial schools."[62] Through the German Land Association, New Ulm's *Turner* established schools that educated seventy-two pupils by 1858. The association, as it dissolved in 1859, created an endowment for public education but gifted it on a strict secular condition: no Bibles

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61. For example, in her book *Dakota War Whoop,* Harriet Bishop, a Baptist missionary in Minnesota, perpetuated myths concerning New Ulm's *Turner* origins. *German Town* quoted her work:

> The original proprietors had stipulated that no church edifice should ever disgrace its soil, under penalty of returning to the former owners. With no religious constraints, they became strong in wickedness, defiant of the restraints of the Gospel, and resolved that no minister should be allowed among them. One they drove from the place, and another was annoyed in every possible way. Even private Christians could not live in peace. They built a dancing hall, and the Sabbaths were spent drinking and dancing.
>
> As the crowning act of ungodliness, some of the "baser sort" paraded the streets one bright Sabbath day bearing a mock figure purporting to represent our blessed Savior and labeled with blasphemous mottoes; and the closing scene of the day was burning him in effigy (Hoisington, *German Town*, 21).

The effigy story is based on a real 1858 event, as recounted by *Turner* eyewitness Julius Berndt to the *New Ulm Review* ("Ananias Club for B. Sunday," May 7, 1913, 1, 8, https://lccn.loc.gov/sn89081128). However, the *Turner* did not burn Christ in effigy, but burned an effigy of a Mr. Fischer of Cincinnati, president of a New Ulm mill, who had refused to pay the New Ulm workingmen who built his mill. Incensed, *Turner* city planner Christian Prignitz suggested they hold a mock funeral for Fischer to show their disdain. A funeral dirge, complete with a band, the effigy of Fischer, and mourners, proceeded from downtown New Ulm to the *Turnhalle*, where wood shavings and pieces of lumber from the construction of a school addition were used to burn the effigy.

62. Johnson, "Adjustment to the United States," 55.

were to be included in the school library, and religious instruction was to be excluded from the curriculum.[63]

The New Ulm *Turner* approached religion with attitudes ranging from tolerance to open antagonism. At the 1901 dedication of an expanded, grander *Turnhalle*, William Pfaender defended the *Turnverein* against accusations of religious intolerance, asserting that the freethinkers had always respected the place of organized religion in their city's development:

> Our opponents have often said the Turners tried to prevent the establishment of churches. This is a myth and too absurd to believe. The tendency of the Turnverein has been, and is throughout, progressive, and we knew well enough that with the anticipated development of the town all kinds of people would locate here, who in spite of different views as to religion would be able to reside peaceably side by side on this beautiful spot and it is an undeniable fact that most of the early settlers were members of the Catholic church and with whom we always lived in most peaceful communion and harmony.
>
> The Turners and free-thinkers of New Ulm have never tried to attack a good fellow citizen holding different views on account of his religion or even to mock him, because they honor, in connection with the principle of brotherly love, the saying, "do right and fear nobody." For that reason we have no cause to fear on account of our views, but have a free right in this land of unlimited religious freedom to command the honor

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63. Hoisington, *German Town*, 20–21. In 1871, the National Conference of Freethinkers commissioned a textbook for freethought Sunday schools. In "Adjustment to the United States," contributed to *The Forty-eighters,* Johnson described its widespread use among American freethinkers: "The *Leitfaden fuer den Unterricht in den Sonntags-Schulen freier Gemeinden,* a textbook for instruction in Sunday schools of free congregations, is a fascinating catechism of humanitarianism. The *Leitfaden* was adopted by German freethinker societies from Philadelphia to San Francisco and was still used in *Turner* Sunday schools at the turn of the century" (Johnson, "Adjustment to the United States," 56–57).

The New Ulm *Turnverein* operated a Sunday school that in 1892 served about 175 children (Robert Nix, "The Public School," in *New Ulm in Word and Picture: J.H. Strasser's History of a German-American Settlement (1892)*, ed. and trans. Don Heinrich Tolzmann [Indianapolis, IN: Max Kade German-American Center, 1997], 25). See fig. 17 for a photograph of schoolchildren in front of the New Ulm *Turnhalle*. In the 1979 documentary *New Ulm, Minnesota: Island in the Plains* (directed by Mark Lowry, Twin Cities Public Television, 1979), Kurt Bell (1894–1996), a retired New Ulm dentist, reminisced about his experiences with the *Turnverein* and its Sunday school in the early twentieth century:

> I've been a member of the *Turnverein* since 1913, when we went to the Denver *Turnfest*. But my father always says [to me], "You were a *Turner* before you were born." My mother was a strong *Turner*. You know, dad was Catholic. He was—he gradually came into it [the *Turnverein*]. But he always says, "You were a *Turner* before you were born." My mother, when she was pregnant with me, she insisted on going to the gym [at the *Turnhalle*], and dad didn't like that. So, I was a *Turner* before I was born [laughs]… We [the *Turnverein* Sunday school students] had Ben Stockman, a Scotchman of some nobility. He taught Sunday school. He taught us agnosticism and Shakespeare. We didn't give a damn for either [laughs] (*New Ulm, Minnesota: Island in the Plains*, 5:49–7:18).

> and acknowledgement due a conscientious and true citizen when he shows by his life and his acts results of his activity.[64]

But the *Turner* often spoke against religion and belittled its practice. During a *Turnfest* oration delivered in New Ulm,[65] the same Pfaender openly denounced organized religion. While professing tolerance, he framed an ideological conflict in which rationalism would overcome "religious blindness." In 1868, New Ulm's leading *Turner* prophesied "victory for freethought" in a triumph as inevitable as the flow of the Minnesota River:

> According to the principles laid down in our national platform, the *Turner* are committed to unconditional progress in both political and religious matters. Although no *Turner* is asked about his religious views, it is nevertheless self-evident that through serious and thorough research he will completely emancipate himself from the errors that still keep millions of people in spiritual slavery today. This result is entirely natural, and only blind fanaticism or the greatest ignorance can therefore condemn the *Turner*'s aspirations in the religious sphere. The *Turner* is tolerant and respects the religious convictions of every human being, but he also demands that his own convictions be respected. Since the fanaticism of priestly tyranny (*Pfaffenthum*, pejorative) does not want to grant him this right, he is forced to fight priestly tyranny with all his might as an obstacle to the development of true freedom. This struggle of reason against darkness, of common sense against religious blindness, will end, even if it takes hundreds of years, with victory for freethought. The spirit of ever-active progress cannot be held back any more than you can command the water of the Minnesota River to flow back to its sources.[66]

Hoisington characterized the *Turner* worldview as one shaped by the assumption that religious faith could not survive exposure to rationalism: "The underlying message was that the Turners wanted a community open to all beliefs—but that if people really thought about it, they would

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64. William Pfaender, "[Address at the Dedication of the New Ulm Turnhalle]," *New Ulm Review*, 30 June 1901, translated and reprinted in *William Pfaender and the German American Experience*, ed. Grady Steele Parker (Roseville, MN: Edinborough Press, 2004), 85. See fig. 16 for a photograph of the 1901 *Turnhalle*, at whose dedication Pfaender delivered this address.

65. A *Turnfest* was a celebration of human achievement. Reflecting the *Turner*'s "sound mind in a sound body" motto, a typical *Turnfest* featured competition in both gymnastics and oration (Prahl, "The Turner," 108–10).

66. William Pfaender, "Festrede, gehalten von Herrn William Pfaender," *New Ulm Post*, 11 September 1868, microfilm, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. See fig. 7 for a photograph of a group of *Turner* during the 1868 *Turnfest*, at which Pfaender delivered this oration.

jettison the supernatural aspects of religious belief."[67] Once awakened by freethought, the religious would simply abandon faith.

New Ulm's religious communities remember conflict with the *Turner*.[68] Presenting a counterpoint to the ideological harmony asserted in Pfaender's 1901 *Turnhalle* speech, Alexander Berghold, a clergyman contemporary to Pfaender, critiqued the anticlerical aggression of New Ulm's *Turner* founders, framing their religious antagonism as symptomatic of a fundamental misunderstanding of freedom. Because Berghold, the first Catholic priest to serve in city limits (1869–90), was known for his amiable relationship with the *Turner*,[69] his

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67. Hoisington, *German Town*, 22–23.

68. *Holy Trinity Church of New Ulm, Minnesota: A Record of 75 Years, 1869–1944* (New Ulm, MN: Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, 1944), 12–13, copy held at Cathedral Library, New Ulm, MN; August Zich, ed., *Geschichte der Minnesota-Synode und ihrer einzelnen Gemeinden: Ein Gedenkstein zum fünfzigjährigen Synodal-Jubiläum* (St. Louis, MO: Louis Lange, 1909), 163; *New Ulm, Minnesota: Island in the Plains*, directed by Mark Lowry, Twin Cities Public Television, 1979, 6:14–6:56, https://www.tpt.org/new-ulm-minnesota-island-in-the-plains/. The Catholic *Holy Trinity Church* recorded the conflict:

> In the autumn of 1855, a great number of the Turner Society members from Cincinnati, Ohio, joined the first settlers of New Ulm, and the population rapidly rose to 1600… Because of their overwhelming numbers, they had great influence in matters of school and government. This fact also caused considerable friction between the so-called free-thinkers and the "church people" (*Holy Trinity Church*, 12–13).

The Lutheran *Geschichte* remembered New Ulm as an environment hostile to organized religion:

> Most of the founders and first inhabitants belonged to the German *Turnverein*, whose aim was, of course, to make New Ulm a "*Turnerstadt*." It is evident on its face that this did not attract church-minded people to settle in the newly founded town. Nevertheless, a few "church people" did come here in the early years, but for various reasons they did not establish a congregation (Zich, *Geschichte*, 163).

In *New Ulm, Minnesota: Island in the Plains*, Harold Bierbaum (1908–1980) recalled a local minister's sermon to illustrate the city's ideological rift:

> But I remember very, very well, in a sermon one time, when our minister would say, "If you go to Turner Hall, even to the theatre, and the *jüngste Tag,* that Day of Reckoning, would come—and you would be in Turner Hall—how would you explain that to the Lord?" And to tell you—that was really something, you know, because boy, you weren't getting caught there at a time like that [laughs]. This, of course, was the doings of somebody [the minister] who, of course, was highly motivated and felt that this—this was a sad part of it: it really cut the community and held the community back horribly (*New Ulm, Minnesota: Island in the Plains*, 6:14–6:56).

69. For example, Berghold once helped John Hauenstein, a prominent New Ulm brewer and *Turner*, build a fishpond in front of his house (Hoisington, *German Town*, 81). Pfaender's 1901 favorable reference to the

characterization offers a vital treatment of New Ulm's sociological history from a religious perspective that is both informed and balanced:

> In 1858 the *Turner* began to build their *Halle*, which was to serve as both a place for communal recreation and a meeting place for local authorities. Everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs, participated in its construction. Shares were issued to raise the necessary funds, and construction continued without interruption on both Sundays and workdays. The harmony, however, did not last long, as so-called "church people" were treated especially harshly. Some overzealous "liberals" ("*Freisinnige*") went too far, and the *Neu-Ulm Pionier*, the leading newspaper of the settlement, published by Nägele and Gerstenhauer, also contributed to this. In keeping with the social trend, they held the mistaken view that religious congregations in a thoroughly liberal city were detrimental to the peaceful coexistence of citizens and to the civic whole. A readthrough of the aforementioned newspaper, which places the social and religious conditions of the time before the eyes of the reader in a very interesting way, will always be of great interest to the cultural historian. Because of a misunderstanding of freedom, New Ulm became notorious among dissenters and especially among so-called "church people."[70]

The antagonism depicted in Berghold's writing explains the clear hesitance of some "church people" to build sanctuaries within city limits. For example, while St. George (West Newton Township) and Cottonwood Township—just outside New Ulm—both featured completed Catholic churches before the Dakota War, construction of New Ulm's first Catholic church, a small wooden structure begun in 1858, progressed slowly. It never saw completion after its destruction by fire during the conflict in 1862. During New Ulm's reconstruction, according to the Catholic parish history *Holy Trinity Church of New Ulm Minnesota: A Record of 75 Years—1869–1944*, both devastation from the war and ideological "friction" slowed their second attempt. It observed: "Discouraged by the Indian massacre and the prevailing friction among the settlers, many of the Catholic pioneers hesitated to cooperate in rebuilding the

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Catholics of New Ulm at the 1901 *Turnhalle* dedication was likely inspired, in part, by Berghold's positive relationship with the *Turner*.

70. Alexander Berghold, *Indianer-Rache oder die Schreckenstage von Neu-Ulm*, 2nd ed. (Graz, Austria: Verlags-Buchhandlung Styria, 1892), 35.

church."[71] Construction began in 1866, Berghold arrived in 1869, and the Catholic church was finally dedicated in 1870.[72]

Indeed, the Lutheran community that built the New Ulm college emerged against a dominant civic culture that, while avowing tolerance, openly resented the presence of organized religion. This hostility found a public platform in the *Neu-Ulm Pionier*, once the city's leading newspaper, which regularly published vitriolic attacks against local "church people." Its rhetoric shamed the religious as ignoramuses, poor parents, and spiritual slaves, and the clergy as parasites not welcome in New Ulm.[73] An article attacking church-going parents and clergy, dated December 9, 1858, exemplified the religious antagonism of the *Turner*:

> Should some people really go to church when they do not know where they are to get the means to humanely feed, clothe, raise, educate, and care for their families—and yet have pledged ten, fifteen, or even twenty dollars? They and their families are falling into ruin, while fattening the bellies of distant, lazy people whose business it is to exploit the superstitions of fools (*Dummen*) for their own benefit.
>
> It is horrifying to have to witness such perversity and neglect of duty toward the children one has brought into the world. It is absurd to scold us for this, because we proclaim prosperity and education for all, because we proclaim every person to be his own king, priest, and judge, in order to finally banish all those polyps, leeches, parasites, and arrogant rulers of whatever kind from the human race once and for all.
>
> To stick with the most despicable of all untruths—that of imposed dogma: can't every vain simpleton, every intellectual scoundrel become a priestling (*Pfaffe*, pejorative) if he is lazy and impudent enough to make lying his business and, in such immortality (*Unmortalität*), after passing the dog training program (*Hundedressur*), stand before the intellectually mature people and babble "spiritual" quackery at them?[74]

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71. *Holy Trinity Church*, 14.

72. *Holy Trinity Church*, 14–17, 22.

73. "New Ulm Churches—Early Antagonism as Evidenced by Comments of the 'Pioneer,'" New Ulm—Religious Antagonisms File (22-1), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. The New Ulm—Religious Antagonisms File at the Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, collects instances of anti-religious hostility by New Ulm *Turner*.

74. "[Against Religious Parents and Clergy]," *Neu-Ulm Pionier*, December 9, 1858, reprinted in "Early Antagonism," New Ulm—Religious Antagonisms File (22-1), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

The *Turner* also appropriated biblical texts and imagery to mock Christians.[75] In 1858, one contributor—reveling in the "misunderstanding of freedom" of Berghold's account—announced: "Priestlings, hypocrites, and other unproductive rabble, who are only accustomed to eking out a useless life from the sweat of others, will find no fertile ground, no home here. Away, Satan!"[76]

The Lutherans organized their congregation on July 30, 1865. St. Paul's laid a cornerstone for their church on September 3, 1865.[77] On April 1, 1866, the congregation

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75. For example, in an article dated November 12, 1859, a *Neu-Ulm Pionier* writer quoted selected verses from Matthew 23 to mock the efforts of a traveling preacher at the Little Cottonwood River, south of New Ulm ("[Mock of English Methodist Clergyman]," *Neu-Ulm Pionier*, November 12, 1859, reprinted in "Early Antagonism," New Ulm—Religious Antagonisms File [22-1], Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN).

76. "[Away, Satan!]" *Neu-Ulm Pionier*, January 1, 1858, reprinted in "Early Antagonism," New Ulm—Religious Antagonisms File (22-1), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. For "Away, Satan!" the *Pionier* article used the transliterated Greek *Apage Satanas!* to appropriate exorcism language.

77. Zich, *Geschichte*, 165; "Grundsteinlegung [Cornerstone Laying]," *New Ulm Post*, September 8, 1865, reprinted in "New Ulm Churches—St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Church Buildings," translated by Otto Engel, March 25, 1994, St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. In the *New Ulm Post* report on the cornerstone laying, the writer celebrated the fact that the *Turner* did not disturb the Lutheran service as a credit to the "free and tolerant attitude" of New Ulm's citizens:

> During the past summer a number of festivities took place on which we have reported in the columns of this paper. These were brought about by many dear and interesting connections with the past and for that reason were given a fine and enthusiastic reception. First we had the Lincoln memorial observance. Then there was the Fourth of July celebration combined with the dedication of the Turner Hall. Next was the school festival and finally the remembrance of August 18th. Not a single discordant note or tone was evident in any one of these celebrations.
>
> All these festivities of a more general nature were joined on the last Sunday by another that had all the characteristics of a special and sectional one, but was not any less in place. For at this time the festive laying of the cornerstone for the new evangelical-protestant church took place. Many new church members took part in these festivities as well as a goodly number of onlookers. They were conducted by Mr. Hoffman, pastor from Stillwater. All went ahead in an orderly manner without a disturbance of any kind.
>
> It certainly would have met with the disapproval of the majority of those present if there had been any disturbances on the part of those who may have felt and thought otherwise. That in connection with these festivities nothing happened that would have cast a shadow on those present points to the free and tolerant attitude of the citizens of this community ("Grundsteinlegung," *New Ulm Post*, 8 September 1865).

observed Easter at a service held in their unfinished church building.[78] On June 17, 1866, J.C.F. Heyer, president and founder of the Minnesota Synod, preached for its dedication.[79]

War, Plague, and Disaster

Established in New Ulm's post-war period, the pioneer Lutheran congregation was tested and strengthened through a locust plague (1873–77) and tornado (1881) during the pastorate of Gottlieb Reim (1870–82), under whose leadership St. Paul's grew to 450 members by 1882, just before the college effort began.[80]

In *Harvest of Grief: Grasshopper Plagues and Public Assistance in Minnesota, 1873–78,* Annette Atkins interpreted the testimonies of Minnesotans who endured the locust plague against the record of government relief efforts. The Rocky Mountain locust invaded not only Minnesota, but an immense territory that stretched from Texas to Canada, from Nevada to Missouri, in

78. Zich, *Geschichte*, 165. Eighteen years later, the people of St. Paul's would ascend New Ulm's bluffs for the dedication of Dr. Martin Luther College.

79. Zich, *Geschichte*, 165. See fig. 18 for a photograph of the completed 1866 church. I grew up at St. Paul's and have heard the story repeated that a mob of *Turner* marched up State Street to disrupt the dedication service of the church, either at the 1866 dedication of the first building or the 1882 dedication of the second building. The *Turner* crowd was pushed back, the story goes, by a group of Catholics, sympathetic to the Lutheran effort, who met the *Turner* on State Street from the other direction. I have not been able to find written evidence of this event, although others have in the past. Darla Gebhard remembered a nineteenth-century handwritten account in local archives that described a *Turner* marching band disrupting the 1866 dedication service. On a warm June day in Minnesota, the windows of St. Paul's were likely open, which presented an opportunity for anti-religious bullying the *Turner* exploited. The story epitomizes the zeitgeist of nineteenth-century New Ulm (Darla Gebhard, research librarian, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN, in discussion with the author, January 16, 2026).

80. *Verhandlungen der zweiundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Minnesota und anderen Staaten, gehalten in Gemeinschaft mit der Erw. Ev.-Luth. Synode von Wisconsin u.a. St. in La Crosse, Wis., vom 8.–14. Juni 1882* (Milwaukee, WI: Germania, 1882), 71, copy held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Mequon, WI. Reim served as interim president of the Wisconsin Synod (1864–65). He was pastor of a parish in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, when he accepted the call to New Ulm.

unfathomable numbers; they darkened skies, devoured crops, and devastated local economies.[81] Atkins collected true-to-life accounts of the plague both fictional and nonfictional:

> Novelist Ole E. Rølvaag described a scene that must have occurred throughout the Midwest. Rølvaag's hero, Per Hansa, and several neighbors stood together in the fields pleased with themselves and with their anticipated crop. "Never had the Lord sent finer weather for wheat to ripen in!" they all agreed. In a festive and exultant mood, one of the neighbors rejoiced, "Well boys, in my opinion the Land of Canaan didn't have much on this country—no, I'm damned if it had!" In the midst of this gladness Per Hansa peered into the west and muttered to himself, "What in the devil!" What he saw he did not understand, but it "sent a nameless chill through his blood."
>
> Nonfictional accounts are no less dramatic. As one farmer recalled, "a large black cloud suddenly appeared high in the west from which came an ominous sound. The apparition moved directly toward us, its dark appearance became more and more terrifying and the sound changed to a deep hum… We heard the buzzing; we saw the shining wings, the long bodies, the legs. The grasshoppers—the scourge of the prairie—were upon us." Another settler described his experience: "So many times I think of June 12, 1873. My younger brother and I were in school that day… and about two o'clock the great cloud of grasshoppers came down. We rushed out of school, and started home. We had to hold our hands over our faces to keep them from hitting us in our eyes."[82]

Once arrived, the locusts laid eggs, perpetuating a lifecycle that made them a perennial scourge. Local governments, including Brown County, responded by offering bounties for the removal of locusts. Farmers experimented with numerous forms of pest control—including use of so-called "hopperdozers"—to no avail.[83] Thousands lost their livelihoods and were made dependent on government relief. Finally, Minnesota Governor John S. Pillsbury declared a

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81. Annette Atkins, *Harvest of Grief: Grasshopper Plagues and Public Assistance in Minnesota, 1873–78* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 13.

82. Atkins, *Harvest of Grief*, 17. The Rølvaag reference comes from his epic *Giants in the Earth*, which depicts the trials of Norwegian immigrant homesteaders in Dakota Territory during the 1870s. See fig. 19 for a postcard from St. Peter, Minnesota, that powerfully illustrates the desperation of those who suffered the locust plague.

83. Atkins, *Harvest of Grief*, 7; Hoisington, *German Town*, 53. A "hopperdozer" was a bulldozer-like device that collected and trapped locusts in a pan of kerosene or oil. Brown County farmers brought wagonloads of locusts into New Ulm, where they dumped their bounty into a hole in the courthouse square. William Pfaender recalled citizens digging trenches, burning straw, and engaging "all possible measures and kinds of machinery" to control the pests. Writing in 1892, he reported that the courthouse square still featured "a slightly raised area created when thousands of bushels of the insects were dumped into a large hole in the ground and destroyed" (Pfaender, "The Locust Plague," in *New Ulm in Word and Picture*, 16).

statewide day of prayer on April 26, 1877, calling on Minnesotans to ask for deliverance from the locusts. A few days later, the locusts left; the plague had ended.[84]

While both city and state rebounded quickly after the locust plague,[85] disaster struck again locally on July 15, 1881, when a tornado swept through New Ulm. The cyclone killed five and injured fifty-three, carving a path that destroyed St. Paul's church and leveled much of the city.[86] The Minnesota Synod sent a request for aid to the *Gemeindeblatt*, which described the

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84. In *Harvest of Grief*, Atkins recounted the surprising and sudden departure of the locusts, which had plagued Minnesota for years:

> No one really knew why the grasshoppers left. The entomologists could not adequately explain it. Only the religious had an answer. Governor John S. Pillsbury had declared a day of prayer for April 26, 1877, calling on citizens to plead for deliverance from this plague. A few days later, one settler remembered, "The grasshoppers rose in a body clouding the sunshine and left for parts unknown never to return and I certainly believe in answers coming to prayer" (Atkins, *Harvest of Grief*, 26–27).

85. In *New Ulm in Word and Picture*, Pfaender credited agricultural diversification as key to New Ulm's survival of the locust plague:

> If the farmers hadn't raised a lot of cattle, then the whole region would have been impoverished, as this proved to be the actual resource which saved the area. Otherwise, it would have taken years for the farmers to recover even partially. And here we can say with a great deal of pride: only a few of the many German farmers in the area were forced to leave their homes. Indeed, most of them survived the disasters to become even more successful in the future years, and this was due basically to their diversified farming, as well as to their toughness and perseverance (Pfaender, "The Locust Plague," 16).

In *Harvest of Grief*, Atkins reproduced the year-end diary entry of a thankful settler (December 31, 1877):

> In reviewing the events of the closing twelve months it is notable that Minnesota emerged clothed in the golden glory of such a harvest as was never before seen. It was the year when the grasshoppers took their final flight, and 35,000,000. bushels of the finest wheat that grew were garnered in our granaries. A memorable year, if for only these two events alone, and for the consequent impulse they gave to the prosperity of the State, to the revival of all kinds of business, and to the tide of immigration which, since harvest, has been pouring into our frontier counties on a scale much larger than has been known for years (Atkins, *Harvest of Grief*, 29).

86. In *German Town,* Hoisington noted the mixed responses New Ulm received to its request for disaster relief: "From across the country, donations poured into the city—although Rochester (Minnesota) reportedly telegraphed back that [the tornado] was God's punishment for the sins of the Turners" (Hoisington, *German Town*, 62–63).

wreckage and personal loss of the New Ulm congregation in its August 1, 1881, edition.[87] Lutherans nationwide sent $6,040 to make possible the construction of a new church.[88]

On May 7, 1882, the congregation laid the cornerstone for a much-enlarged building measuring 46 by 72 feet, with a tower 16 by 16 feet at its base and 120 feet tall.[89] The new church rose at the corner of State and Second North Streets, diagonally opposite the 1866 church. Gottlieb Reim, however, did not live to see its completion; he died on June 22, 1882, from complications following a road accident sustained while visiting a member in Nicollet County.[90]

Confessional Identity

In 1865, the congregation had incorporated as the *Ev. Luth.-Reformierte St. Paulus-Gemeinde in New Ulm, Minnesota*, with "*Reformierte*" acknowledging the several Reformed members present at its charter meeting. Although unionistic in name, the congregation subscribed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, a decidedly Lutheran statement.[91] The Minnesota Synod took an early

87. A. Kuhn, "Bitte um Hilfe!" *Gemeindeblatt* 16, no. 23 (1 August 1881): 183, http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4394. The article described St. Paul's church as "almost a pile of rubble" and stated that "over 30 families have lost all their belongings." In Kuhn's estimation, one-third of New Ulm lay in ruin, another third was severely damaged, and only the city's south side had been partially spared. See fig. 20 for a photograph of St. Paul's church following the tornado.

88. The *Geschichte* reported that the request for aid went out to congregations of the Synodical Conference, a national fellowship of Lutheran church bodies including the Wisconsin Synod and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to which the Minnesota Synod belonged up to its merger with the Wisconsin and Michigan Synods in 1917 (Zich, *Geschichte*, 166).

89. This is the current church. Major additions came in 1899, 1951, and 2001. See fig. 21 for a photograph of this church under construction.

90. Zich, *Geschichte*, 167.

91. Zich, *Geschichte*, 164–65. Concerning this subscription to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, St. Paul's entry in *Geschichte der Minnesota-Synode* exclaimed: "This was certainly a gracious act of God!" This was likely written by C.J. Albrecht, pastor of St. Paul's from 1882 to 1924.

interest in St. Paul's and actively guided its theological formation. By the time St. Paul's laypeople pursued a college in New Ulm, their effort would be a wholly Lutheran undertaking.

The Minnesota Synod oversaw the work of resident pastors at St. Paul's, even before the congregation had officially joined the synod. A ministerial candidate named Popp ("*Kandidat Popp,*" 1866–67) and ministers August Kenter (1867–69), Gottlieb Reim (1870–1882), and C.J. Albrecht (1882–1924) all served the St. Paul's congregation under the auspices of the Minnesota Synod.[92]

Yet the synod refused to grant St. Paul's membership until 1870 due to its unionistic name, addressing the issue at its 1867, 1868, and 1869 conventions.[93] At the 1869 convention, the Minnesota Synod clarified its position, expressing concerns over St. Paul's unionistic "mixed practice" in which they distributed both bread (loaves, Reformed) and host (wafers, Lutheran) in Holy Communion: "A mixed practice in the holy Lord's Supper is out of the question, because a conscientious, Lutheran pastor cannot allow Reformed Christians to come to the Lord's Supper, unless they give up their error."[94] In September 1869, J.H. Sieker, president of the Minnesota Synod (1869–1876), presided over a meeting at St. Paul's, where the congregation agreed to strike the Reformed title from its name but, in a lasting expression of the Reformed tradition, use only bread (loaves) instead of the host (wafers) during Holy Communion. After committee review, the 1870 convention accepted St. Paul's into the Minnesota Synod.[95]

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92. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1868, 52–53; Zich, *Geschichte*, 165.

93. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1867, 42; 1868, 55; 1869, 82. The 1868 proceedings recorded: "The acceptance of the Protestant congregation at New Ulm was postponed until the congregation changes its United name." The Minnesota Synod's refusal to compromise doctrinally to accept St. Paul's demonstrates the firmly confessional identity of the young church body.

94. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1869, 82.

95. Zich, *Geschichte*, 166.

In July 1882, St. Paul's called C.J. Albrecht, then serving in Greenwood, Hennepin County, and installed him on August 20. The use of bread appears to have endured through the pastorate of Gottlieb Reim (1870–1882), so that it took Albrecht by surprise upon his arrival in New Ulm. Conflicted, the new pastor expressed that he could not fulfill his office if St. Paul's continued the Reformed practice.[96] Before the congregation moved to resolve the issue, Albrecht launched a period of intensive doctrinal instruction to teach the laypeople anew—both privately and publicly—the Lutheran doctrine of Holy Communion. The congregation, in agreement with their pastor, then voted in assembly to use the host going forward, prompting several dissenting members to leave.[97] Because of Albrecht's careful leadership and thorough instruction, the laypeople of St. Paul's emerged from the controversy stronger—a group more mindful of their theology and renewed in their Lutheran identity directly before the college effort began.

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran School

After St. Paul's dedicated its expanded sanctuary on October 22, 1882, a period of bold institutional development ensued. Remarkably, within three years, the laypeople would also participate in the dedication of a college (1884) and, the following year, a parochial school (1885). Secure in their new sanctuary after the war, plague, and disaster that marked the prior

96. Gottlieb Reim's death in 1882 precipitated C.J. Albrecht's call that same year, meaning Reim could not have explained the practice to him, adding to Albrecht's surprise. Reim died following complications from a road accident suffered en route to visit a St. Paul's member. St. Paul's entry in the Minnesota Synod *Geschichte*, likely written by C.J. Albrecht, reported he knew nothing of the Reformed practice when he was called to St. Paul's and was "greatly surprised" by it ("*er war darum sehr erstaunt*"; Zich, *Geschichte*, 167–68). The Minnesota Synod's 1869 clarification to St. Paul's foreshadowed Albrecht's reaction.

97. Zich, *Geschichte*, 169. These dissenting members formed a new congregation, *Friedens-Kirche,* which built a small church on North State Street.

twenty years, the laypeople of St. Paul's may have shared the earned, optimistic confidence expressed by local writer J.H. Strasser in *New Ulm in Word and Picture*:

> If we should now chance a look into the future of our German pioneer town and the surrounding area… we do so feeling absolutely justified in having a great deal of hope that the success it has attained thus far, will continue in the future. Everything points in that direction. This is as definite as anything regarding the future can be. Why shouldn't New Ulm with its prosperous population, which has faced all kinds of adversity in the past, provide the most solid possible foundation for future success?[98]

Emboldened, the special drive among the laypeople to build a parochial school rested in their desire to provide high-quality Lutheran education for their children and to circumvent the *Turnverein'*s control over New Ulm's schools. The fifty-year anniversary history of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran School recounted the congregation's early attempts at Lutheran education in the *Turnerstadt* and the mindset of the lay-led *Schulverein* in organizing the school effort:

> During [St. Paul's early history] the pastors of the congregation had attempted to care for the religious training of the children by means of the Sunday and Saturday schools, combined with a comparatively lengthy period of confirmation instruction. That such instruction was inadequate was recognized early by the earnest Christians in the congregation; this inadequacy was made more evident by the fact that the entire public school system of the time was purely in the service of the *Turnverein*, both in the school board and in the teaching force.[99] Efforts to get the congregation to open a parish school

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98. J.H. Strasser, "A Look into the Future," in *New Ulm in Word and Picture*, 29. See figs. 14 and 15 for photographs of Minnesota Street in the years around the establishment of the New Ulm college. See fig. 22 for a photograph of St. Paul's second church building, completed two years before the dedication of the college.

99. In 1883, *Turner* Robert Nix was appointed Superintendent of Schools in New Ulm. In *German Town*, Hoisington notes the cultural significance of his tenure within the *Turnerstadt*:

> [Nix] represented the full flowering of the dream of the original settlers. Son of a leader (Jacob Nix) of the "defenders of New Ulm," [Robert] Nix was a brilliant man with a gift for language and an active participant in Turner gymnastics programs. On the surface, Nix's career might seem like a great success. Early in his tenure, the city finally approved construction of a new school to replace the woefully inadequate German Park building. Eight years later, another new structure, known as the East Primary School—then later as Franklin—opened its doors, greeting scholars from the Goosetown side of the railroad tracks (Hoisington, *German Town*, 83–84).

However, Nix's later tenure was marked by a school board controversy that escalated through the 1890s. Lutherans such as C.J. Albrecht, H. Schapekahm, and A. Reim, a college professor, became involved with a faction opposing a so-called "Turner Gang" over questions of curriculum and public funding. The local controversy reached statewide significance in the late 1890s when John Lind, a New Ulm *Turner* who would later serve as Minnesota governor, filed a libel suit—following his narrowly lost 1896 gubernatorial campaign—against a Twin Cities

> seemed to promise but slow progress; so the group of members especially interested in securing thorough Christian training for their children organized a so-called school society (*Schulverein*), and with the backing of the late Rev. C.J. Albrecht came before the congregation with the request that the old church building on the site of the present school house be turned over to them for school purposes.
>
> The organizers of the school were determined to give their children a thorough foundation in the blessed truths of Scripture, as well as to provide them as wellrounded a general education as seemed necessary for that time and for those conditions.
>
> Although New Ulm was thoroughly German in every respect, the founders of the school and the congregation saw the necessity for providing instruction in English as well, almost from the beginning of the school.[100]

As proposed, St. Paul's school opened at the site of the old church building in August 1885. Seventy-five students enrolled almost immediately.[101]

The New Ulm College

Soon after C.J. Albrecht's arrival, Friedrich Boock, a man who resolved to "make sure God's Word rules" in New Ulm, Minnesota, articulated his vision for a synodical institution placed in the *Turnerstadt*. In *Geschichte der Minnesota-Synode*, a chapter on the history of St. Paul's, New Ulm, likely written by Albrecht,[102] recorded Boock's proposal to survey synod congregations and Albrecht's delight to have found a "kindred spirit" among the laypeople:

> A member of the local congregation, Mr. Fried. Boock, suggested to the pastor of the congregation (who was elected president of the synod in 1883) that a survey be

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newspaper that had accused him of atheism. A. Reim testified at the trial (Hoisington, *German Town*, 86–87). Because the school board controversy began after the founding of the college and therefore did not shape the college's initial development, it falls outside the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, the dramatic episode illustrates the ideological conflict that shaped New Ulm's Lutheran community.

100. *To the Glory of God and in Memory of His Abiding Blessing for Fifty Years: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran School, New Ulm, Minnesota* (New Ulm, MN: St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, 1935), 1–3, 5, copy held in "New Ulm Churches: St. Paul's Lutheran (WELS)," Martin Luther College Library, New Ulm, MN.

101. *To the Glory of God*, 2. The school moved to its current Payne Street location in 1971.

102. Albrecht was pastor of St. Paul's, New Ulm (1882–1924), at the time of the book's publication in 1909.

> conducted in the synod to see if it would be possible to establish a *Lehranstalt* (educational institution) here in New Ulm. The pastor, who had long harbored this idea, was delighted to have a kindred spirit. He traveled from congregation to congregation and discussed this important matter with pastors and congregations. With God's help, a *Lehranstalt* was founded here.[103]

Friedrich Boock

A member of the Chicago Land Society (non-*Turner*) that initially settled New Ulm, Christian Friedrich Boock became an early Lutheran leader who first proposed the institution that became Dr. Martin Luther College. His settlement of the city, perseverance through war, plague, and disaster, and ambition to develop Lutheran institutions typified the New Ulm layman. In typical fashion, the unique circumstances of the *Turnerstadt* drew the wagonbuilder to assume an elevated role in preserving and advancing his Lutheran faith. Operating in a civic environment that itself embodied the *Turner* ideal, Boock led major lay efforts—namely, the establishment of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church and Dr. Martin Luther College—that embodied the Lutheran ideal. His 1888 gravestone epitaph bore witness to New Ulm's ideological conflict and one man's resolve to overcome it. Laying him to rest at St. Paul's cemetery, the *Turnerstadt* Lutherans honored Boock as a man who "felt obligated to make sure God's Word rules here."[104]

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103. Zich, *Geschichte*, 168–69.

104. Standing tall in New Ulm's Lutheran cemetery, the impressive gravestone and epitaph were almost certainly sponsored by the leadership of St. Paul's following Boock's death (Darla Gebhard, research librarian, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN, in discussion with the author, January 16, 2026). The epitaph is a German poem remembering Boock's role in founding New Ulm, his resolve to "make sure God's Word rules here," the sorrow of his wife and children, and the Christian confidence that they will see each other again in heaven. The epitaph's poetic spelling and capitalization are retained below:

> Der du manches mit Gestiftet
> Gründetest mit diesen Ort
> Hieltst zu Sorgen dich verpflichtet
> Dass hier Waltet Gottes Wort.
> Thun die Deinen, jetzt mit Weinen

Friedrich Boock was born on November 15, 1826, in Osdorf, a German farming village in Schleswig, in the extreme north of present-day Germany. Beginning in 1843, Boock trained as a wheelwright (*Stellmacher*) in Berlin, where he apprenticed under a "*Meister Jöncke*," likely his mother's brother.[105] Later, the First Schleswig War, fought between German and Danish nationalists over control of Schleswig, ended in 1852 with Danish victory. King Frederick VII forced the Danish language to be spoken in Schleswig and ousted German officers, pastors, and teachers from their posts, which prompted many German residents, including Friedrich Boock, to emigrate.[106]

Departing Hamburg for Quebec in 1854,[107] Boock eventually landed in Chicago, where he joined the Chicago Land Society (non-*Turner*), which first planned the German colony that became New Ulm. In 1855, Boock moved to the settlement, where he met his first wife, Maria Albrecht.[108] They married on July 7, 1857, in a ceremony officiated, ironically, by William Pfaender and settled on a farm across the Minnesota River, just above New Ulm in Lafayette

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Deine Gattin, mit den Kleinen,
Hier an Deinen Grabe stehn,
Und in Thränen, sie erwöhnen,
Droben giebts ein Wiedersehn.

Christian F. Boock, gravestone epitaph, 1826–1888, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Cemetery, New Ulm, MN.

105. C. Friedrich Boock, "Lieber Neffe," 11 May 1873, "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. In this 1873 letter to a nephew in Berlin, Boock sent his greetings to "uncle Jönke" and asks for updates on "Henry and Amalie Jönke," likely his uncle and aunt. Boock's mother was named Elisabeth Boock, née Jönke.

106. "Boock Family History," n.d., 7; "Informationen zu Christian Friedrich Boock," n.d.; Christian Friedrich Boock, *Wanderbuch*, photocopy; all items from "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. Friedrich Boock was the first of several Boock family members to emigrate. His nephew, Christian Boock, also settled in New Ulm and became a noted florist.

107. Hamburg Passenger List, ship *Washington*, 1854, original from Staatsarchiv Hamburg (Auswanderungsamt I), scan in private collection of Gerald and Darcy Boock, River Falls, WI.

108. No relation to C.J. Albrecht.

Township. In a letter dated June 29, 1860, to an unnamed sister and brother-in-law in Germany, Friedrich Boock offered early impressions of life in the city he helped found:

> As I mentioned in a former letter that I joined a club which is planning to establish a city, well, that has materialized, the town's name is New Ulm, 5 years ago the first house was built and now there are more than 200 homes, about 1200 to 1300 inhabitants. In New Ulm I also have some property, but at present there is no demand for it, even though its location is good, it is close to the boat landing on the Minnesota River. This river is very much like the Spree in size and full of fish. The town is very romantic and is built on higher levels, the river moves along in snake-like curves with cliffs here and there. On the southern side of the river on higher grounds, you can see summer houses already, in the wooded area I own 4 acres. If those 4 acres would be in the vicinity of Berlin, I would be considered a wealthy man. But I am satisfied that it is close to New Ulm. My farm is only about 3/4 miles from New Ulm, I am able to see the town from my farm. Although my whole belongings are very limited, yet I am satisfied for what is my own which my [wife] and I have carefully managed and so consider myself fortunate, I don't begrudge a king on his throne for my freedom and joy in my family.[109]

The Boock family was living on their farm when the Dakota War of 1862 began. According to family history, before the war, Friedrich Boock had saved the life of a Dakota man, perhaps from drowning in the Minnesota River below his property.[110] As the violence approached, the man Boock had saved warned him to flee. In a statement before the Sioux Depredations Claims Commission following the war, Boock testified concerning his flight to St. Peter and the extensive damage done to his farm and home:

> Friedrich Boock the claimant being sworn says… that on the 18th of Aug last—hearing the news of the Sioux outbreak he fled to St. Peter with his family taking none of his bedding and clothing with him, that he returned home in about 3 weeks, found his house

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109. C. Friedrich Boock, "Liebe Schwester und Schwager," 29 June 1860, trans. unknown, "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. The "1200 to 1300 inhabitants" reflected the recent major influx of settlers from the *Turner* colonization society. The four-acre parcel he owned was almost certainly the generous garden plot that the 1858 *Turner* city plan provided to members of the German Land Association. Boock would have become a member when the Chicago Land Society merged with the *Turner* colonization society.

110. "Christian Friedrich Boock Personal History," private collection of Paulette Boock Hultgren, Bloomington, MN; Boock, *Wanderbuch*, "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

> had been broken open, windows smashed, and household property mentioned in schedule missing.[111]

In the depredation claim, Boock also reported the deaths of two of his young daughters, Emma (two years old) and Louisa (two months old), whom "he believed [died] in consequence of the exposure and sufferings caused by the Indian raid."[112]

In 1863, during New Ulm's reconstruction, Friedrich and Maria Boock moved into the city and made their home at the property "close to the boat landing" mentioned in the above letter. Here, they hosted the 1865 charter meeting of St. Paul's congregation and raised their seven children, three of whom did not survive infancy. In the city, Boock drew on his formal training to open a blacksmith and wagonbuilding shop at 305 North Minnesota Street and later partnered in a successful foundry and machine shop. In a letter dated December 25, 1865, to his brother-in-law Friedrich Samuel Fischer in Berlin, Boock mentioned his organizational role in establishing St. Paul's and thanked God for the simple gifts of health and hard work:

> At present we have founded an Evangelical congregation and decided to build a church. I have been selected as a member of the church council and authorized to supervise the building of the church.
>
> Pride cometh before the fall, which is true, so it is necessary for us to remain humble, and not aim for superior goals, but be satisfied with the simple things in life.
>
> Concerning me and my family I can't thank the Lord enough for our health which He has given us. And further I pray for continued health not for riches, because a healthy person is rich enough to be able to work while I can, my rule is this "Hard work makes life sweet." We, too, have begun preparations for the Christmas season…. The children above all rejoice the most for the simple gifts which they receive just like in Old Germany.[113]

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111. Claim 2004 (Friedrich Boock), Box 4, "Evidence and Findings, 1863–1863," Entry PI-163 703, Sioux Depredations Claims Commission, Record Group 75: Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

112. Claim 2004 (Friedrich Boock), Box 4, "Evidence and Findings, 1863–1863," Entry PI-163 703, NARA.

113. C. Friedrich Boock, "Lieber Schwager!," 25 December 1865, trans. unknown, "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. In the same letter, Boock's writing contextualized his life in broader American history. Mentioning the end of the Civil War, he revealed his abolitionist stance: "The war is

Maria Boock passed away on February 4, 1871, shortly after the birth of their youngest son, and was laid to rest in St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Cemetery.[114]

On May 7, 1871, Friedrich Boock married his second wife, Wilhelmine Plath, in a ceremony officiated by Gottlieb Reim at St. Paul's church.[115] Together, they had eight children, one of whom did not survive infancy. In a letter dated May 11, 1873, to a nephew in Berlin, Boock first related recent changes to his personal life before lamenting the challenges of operating a large business in a young settlement:

> As to my business conditions some changes also have occurred, since I went into a partnership in a foundry and machine shop. We too build wagons in this shop. We are 3 partners in the business and last winter we employed 20 men. Considering the young age of New Ulm, that is quite an undertaking. It takes considerable capital to run such a big business, and many sleepless nights are spent in planning how to raise sufficient funds to pay the salaries which are high and besides much business is done on the credit system. Since I went into this new business, I had to give up my old one which was in the best location on Main Street. I rented it to another and it was the same with my home. I had to rent it to another and built myself another home near the factory.
>
> Although our foundry has much work for the three of us, yet the money is scarce, it seems around here as well in other areas money has passed out of circulation and all big businesses have the greatest problem of raising cash, while the worker has no worry,

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over and everything is moving along in a normal way. Slavery has ended. This was one of the most despicable blemishes on the Republic." The death of Boock's sister Elisabeth Frederike Wilhelmine Fischer occasioned this letter to his brother-in-law Friedrich Samuel Fischer, a letter in which Boock also addressed his nephew William. Offering condolences, Boock expressed his Christian confidence in eternal life: "It is very difficult for us to express our sincere sadness over the loss of your wife, and only the thought of the hereafter solaces us, when our time comes to leave this earth that we will again meet in a better place. Though her death is a terrible blow for us, we still will all say 'The Lord's ways are wonderful and the earth is full of His wisdom.'"

114. "Christian Friedrich Boock Personal History," private collection of Paulette Boock Hultgren, Bloomington, MN; "Informationen zu Christian Friedrich Boock," "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN; "Friedrich Boock," obituary, *New Ulm Review*, 12 December 1888, "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

115. "Rites for Mrs. Boock Mark Close of Life of Pioneer Who Braved Early Privation," obituary, *New Ulm Daily Journal*, 14 December 1939, "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. Born in 1855, Wilhelmine Plath homesteaded with her German immigrant family in Prairieville Township, Brown County, in 1862. Her 1939 obituary described their difficult beginnings: "Their first home was in a crude hole dug in the prairie with a wagon box and sod for the roof. They lived in this primitive house until the father had hauled lumber from Eagle Lake by ox team to erect their first house." See fig. 2 for a photograph of Friedrich and Wilhelmine Boock.

> because he is not in need of capital, no interest to pay, no taxes to pay, if he doesn't own a few 100 dollars of personal property. The worker, the employee, truly has it made.[116]

While growing his enterprise, Boock remained a leader of St. Paul's congregation, serving terms as secretary and councilman.[117]

After proposing the *Lehranstalt* to C.J. Albrecht, likely during a term as church councilman, Boock remained heavily involved in the critical early development of Dr. Martin Luther College.[118] After he and Albrecht proposed the project to the Minnesota Synod in 1883, convention delegates elected Boock to the college's building committee and board of trustees; Boock was reelected as trustee for one-year terms in 1884 and 1885. A team of St. Paul's members, including Friedrich Boock, Ernst G. Koch,[119] William Ruemke, and Herman

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116. Boock, "Lieber Neffe," 11 May 1873, trans. unknown. In 1879, Boock also organized the New Ulm Sugar Manufacturing Company with August Westphal, George Jacobs, William Amme and Henry Hellman, which produced sorghum molasses and sugar. The factory stood on German Street between Fourth and Fifth North Streets. The business failed; and the factory was sold and converted to a vinegar factory in 1883 (Hoisington, *German Town*, 52–53).

117. "Friedrich Boock," obituary, *New Ulm Review*, 12 December 1888; "Informationen zu Christian Friedrich Boock"; both items from "Boock, Peter," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

118. *A Century of Grace: 100th Anniversary, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, New Ulm, Minn., 1865–1965* (New Ulm, MN: St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, 1965), 7, copy held in "New Ulm Churches: St. Paul's Lutheran (WELS)," Martin Luther College Library, New Ulm, MN. Beyond his official roles on committee and board, Boock hastened the college's development in at least one unofficial capacity. St. Paul's parish history remembered Friedrich Boock offering use of his horse to haul tanks of water up the college hill during construction. Wilhelmine Boock guided and encouraged this horse for several weeks. Once construction finished and workers dug a well, the exhausted horse died—"one of the many sacrifices to higher education."

119. Ernst G. Koch (1833–1919), who donated his hilltop land to the college effort, also typified the early New Ulm Lutheran. When the Dakota War broke out, Koch was a fur trader with business at Lake Shetek (Murray County), which saw significant violence. When he heard of the Lake Shetek massacre, Koch immediately set out for Mankato, where he helped organize citizens to come to New Ulm's aid. He served in the local volunteer Cottonwood Company during the war and assisted several rescue expeditions. After the war, he worked in real estate and insurance and served as an agent for the Winona and St. Peter Land Company. He also served as treasurer of both the college building committee and the Minnesota Synod (L.A. Fritsche, ed., *History of Brown County, Minnesota: Its People, Industries, and Institutions, with Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and Genealogical Records of Many of the Old Families*, vol. II [Indianapolis, IN: B.F. Bowen & Company, 1916], 459–61; Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1885, 533; "Ernst G. Koch. The Cottonwood Company," photograph, "Koch, Ernst G., Folder I," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN). See fig. 27 for a portrait of E.G. Koch.

Schapekahm, championed the local college effort. Boock's proposal, Koch's land donation, Schapekahm's architecture, and the group's local fundraising campaign realized a compelling Lutheran vision for the *Turnerstadt*. This lay, grassroots effort complemented Albrecht's synodical influence, organizational leadership, and shared ambition to rally the synod behind the New Ulm college.[120]

Friedrich Boock passed away on December 9, 1888, four years after the college opened, during a typhus epidemic. He had been caring for a sick friend when he caught the infectious disease. In the proceedings of the 1889 Minnesota Synod convention, C.J. Albrecht, then serving as synod president (1883–94), eulogized Boock in his report on the college: "Last December, the Lord took from our midst an enthusiastic member of the board of directors, Mr. Boock from New Ulm, who was very concerned about and active in the institution."[121] On the north side of New Ulm, Boock's St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Cemetery gravestone epitaph reads, in part: "You who helped found and establish this place, felt obligated to make sure God's Word rules here."[122]

C.J. Albrecht

While pastor of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church (1882–1924) and president of the Minnesota Synod (1883–94), Christian Johann (C.J.) Albrecht also became the founding father of Dr.

120. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1883, 478–79; 1884, 505–06; 1885, 538–39. See fig. 26 for a 1903 photograph of C.J. Albrecht with St. Paul's leaders who succeeded the lay founders of the college effort.

121. James Langebartels, trans., "Minnesota Synod Proceedings, 1889," unpublished translation shared with author, 2026, 13.

122. Boock, gravestone epitaph, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Cemetery, New Ulm, MN; "Christian Friedrich Boock Personal History," private collection of Paulette Boock Hultgren, Bloomington, MN; "Friedrich Boock," obituary, *New Ulm Review*, 12 December 1888. See fig. 23 for a photograph of Friedrich Boock's gravestone.

Martin Luther College through his roles as developer, promoter, and first president of the institution (1884–85).

C.J. Albrecht was born on July 13, 1847, in Eschenau, Württemberg, in present-day Germany; his parents were viticulturalists. He graduated from the St. Chrischona mission house in Basel, Switzerland, in August 1872 with classmate and friend Carl Lederer, who later became president of the Michigan Synod (1890–94). Two months later, on October 15, 1872, Albrecht married Maria Frey (1844–1897). The couple then immigrated to the United States, landing first in Lewiston, Minnesota, in November 1872, where Maria's brother Leonard F. Frey served as pastor. Albrecht entered the ministry of the Minnesota Synod in March 1873, serving as pastor in Greenwood Township, Hennepin County, until he accepted the call to St. Paul's, New Ulm, in 1882. During his New Ulm pastorate (1882–1924), St. Paul's dedicated a large sanctuary, secured Dr. Martin Luther College for New Ulm, founded a parochial school, and grew from roughly eighty to 300 families.[123] Albrecht's 1924 obituary in the Wisconsin Synod *Northwestern Lutheran* acknowledged his tireless ministry:

> We may gain a small conception of his labors when we hear that during the time of his pastorate in New Ulm he baptized 2,583 children, confirmed 1,868, solemnized 646 marriages, administered holy communion to 82,744 communicants, and buried 935. If we bear in mind that such a large congregation as ours brings with it much pastoral work, which is increased by the two hospitals in the city, that to his pastoral labors there was added much work that came from his connection with Dr. Martin Luther College and the Synod, then we realize to some extent that we are looking back upon a career full of labor.[124]

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123. Fritsche, *History of Brown County*, vol. II, 265; John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, ed. Leigh D. Jordahl (St. Cloud, MN: Sentinel, 1970), 174–75; Morton A. Schroeder, "Christian Johann Albrecht: A Man for Minnesota," *Northwestern Lutheran* 82, no. 8 (August 1995): 14–15, http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/6963; "Rev. C.J. Albrecht Answers Summons: Veteran Pastor of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church Here Passes Away Yesterday Morning," obituary, *Brown County Journal*, 15 July 1924, "Albrecht, Rev. C.J.," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

124. "Rev. C.J. Albrecht," obituary, *Northwestern Lutheran* 11, no. 16 (10 August 1924): 252–53, http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/5002. See fig. 24 for a portrait of C.J. Albrecht and fig. 25 for a photograph of the pastor with a St. Paul's confirmation class.

While serving as a parish pastor, Albrecht became an organizer at congregational, synodical, and inter-synodical levels. Congregations in Buffalo, Darfur, Lake City, and St. James, Minnesota, were gathered under his leadership. As a private citizen, he spearheaded the development of New Ulm's Union Hospital on the city's south side, which opened in 1915. During the same convention at which he and Friedrich Boock proposed a New Ulm *Lehranstalt*, the Minnesota Synod elected him president (1883–94). In 1891, he and Carl Lederer—his St. Chrischona classmate and president of the Michigan Synod—met in New Ulm and discussed the possible federation of the Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Synods, which was realized in 1892; this federation hastened the synods' 1917 merger into one synod, known today as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.[125]

The laypeople of St. Paul's, New Ulm, cherished their pastor and long remembered his leading role in developing the city's Lutheran institutions. In 1922, upon Albrecht's fiftieth anniversary in pastoral ministry, they coordinated an elaborate service and celebration that progressed through New Ulm in three stages: from church to school to college. The *New Ulm Journal*'s report on the occasion revealed a legacy of synodical leadership, lay development, ministerial recruitment, and endearment to a thriving *Turnerstadt* congregation:

> The festivities Sunday were in honor of Rev. Albrecht's half century of activity as a clergyman and his 40th anniversary as pastor of St. Paul's congregation here. Although elaborate preparations had been made for this twofold jubilee, those in charge were successful in carrying out these extensive plans without the least knowledge of the honored jubilarian. Not until the trustees, accompanied by Prof. August Pieper of Wauwatosa, Wis., stepped into the parsonage shortly before 10 o'clock Sunday morning, to escort him to the church, did Rev. Albrecht have an inkling of the impending celebration. He had prepared his Sunday morning sermon as usual, but was relieved of his pastoral duties temporarily in honor of the occasion.

125. Schroeder, "Christian Johann Albrecht," 14–15; John M. Brenner, "A Synod for the 90s: The 1890s" (paper presented at the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Michigan District Convention, Saginaw, MI, June 9–11, 1992), 9, http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/733.

> Special jubilee services were held in the church. As the beloved pastor and his escort entered, the congregation arose from their seats and sang an appropriate hymn. Rev. Carl Buenger of Kenosha, Wis., a son of the local congregation, officiated at the altar and an inspiring jubilee sermon was preached by Prof. Pieper. After the church choir had rendered a fitting song, F.H. Retzlaff of this city, representing the board of directors of Dr. Martin Luther College, read a congratulatory message, briefly citing Rev. Albrecht's tireless efforts in securing that institution for New Ulm, as well as its maintenance during the trying period of its establishment and since.
>
> At 2:30 o'clock a large number of relatives and friends of Rev. Albrecht gathered at College heights, where an interesting jubilee program was rendered. Rev. Christ. Kock of Belle Plaine was the first speaker and in the course of his remarks read a poem written by him especially for the occasion, as well as a congratulatory letter from the Belle Plaine congregation. Then followed brief addresses by Rev. Ferd. Sattelmeier of Detroit, Mich., a former student of Dr. Martin Luther college, Prof. A. Schaller of the college faculty, Rev. Buenger of Kenosha, and Rev. Albrecht. Herman Aufderheide, secretary of the board of trustees of the local congregation, and who had sent out the invitations for the double jubilee, read a number of congratulatory letters and telegrams from congregations and pastors who were not able to be represented.
>
> Practically the only disappointment experienced was the fact that Rev. Carl Lederer of Saline, Mich., a classmate of Rev. Albrecht, was unable to attend the festivities.[126]

Albrecht passed away on July 10, 1924, at the age of seventy-six, while still serving in his New Ulm pastorate. He was laid to rest at St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Cemetery.

126. "Double Jubilee of Rev. C.J. Albrecht: Venerable Divine of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Congregation Agreeably Feted Sunday. 50 Years in Ministry, 40 Years Pastor Here, Special Jubilee Services were Held at the Local Church and On College Heights," *Brown County Journal*, 25 August 1924, "Albrecht, Rev. C.J.," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

St. Paul's congregation defined themselves by their determination to give God's Word a central, enduring position in New Ulm. The devastation of the 1873–77 locust plague and 1881 tornado did not distract the congregation from this purpose; rather, these disasters tested and confirmed their resolve. The Lutherans established two institutions. The lay-led *Schulverein* envisioned St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran School: a gift to their children born in the *Turnerstadt*, the school provided a formative Lutheran education in which each subject flowed from theology. Their request to build their school atop the ruins of the 1866 church testified to the laypeople's adaptive resilience and drive.[127] Friedrich Boock envisioned a *Lehranstalt*.

The *Lehranstalt* would be the New Ulm college. An almost impossible institution, Dr. Martin Luther College emerged as an ideally Lutheran center of higher education set in the *Turnerstadt*. Boock's proposal met and harnessed the Minnesota Synod's need and desire to train

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127. For the eightieth anniversary of the school (1965), St. Paul's compiled a booklet titled *From a Child: Our Christian Day School Children Give Thanks*, which presents contemporary student reflections that relate to the school's purpose and mission. Student responses demonstrate the successful transmission of God's Word from the first and second generations of *Turnerstadt* Lutherans to future ones.

For example, in a section titled, "Why I am a Happy Child," one student responded: "God has kept me supplied with the things I enjoy and need. I have shelter, food, and other things for which I am thankful and joyful. This is one reason why I'm happy, but not the main one. Most important my parents send me to a Christian school and church where we learn other things which will help us later if we become ministers, teachers, anything. I also have Christian friends, so during vacations I have good company. All of this together is why I am a happy child. Basically I know God's Word and I can tell others how to get to heaven."

In a section titled, "My Life Ambition and Impressions from School Days," one student responded: "My ambition in life is to be a farmer. The reason I have chosen this occupation is that I feel I should help feed the Lord's people or be of help."

At the time of the booklet's compiling, 182 graduates of St. Paul's school had entered service as a Lutheran pastor or teacher (*From a Child: Our Christian Day School Children Give Thanks* [New Ulm, MN: St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, 1965], Preface, 19, 29, copy held in "New Ulm Churches: St. Paul's Lutheran [WELS]," Martin Luther College Library, New Ulm, MN).

its own workers. Yet his vision also challenged the premises of William Pfaender's 1868 prophecy. The so-called "church people" were not in spiritual slavery; the religious were not blind. The *Turner* had achieved a city that enshrined their conception of freedom and rationalism as the highest good. Yet although life in New Ulm had fully awakened its Lutherans to this ideology, they refused to discard their theology as the anticlerical *Turner* anticipated. Thoroughly engaged in Pfaender's "struggle of reason against darkness, of common sense against religious blindness,"[128] the Lutherans upheld a freedom won by the incarnate God lying in a manger, their Christ dying on a cross—great mysteries that offended reason. The *Turner* believed that victory for freethought flowed as surely as the course of the Minnesota River, but the Lutherans believed otherwise.[129] The fundamental premise of the college effort frustrated the philosophical assumptions of New Ulm's ruling elite, who had long dismissed organized religion as spiritual slavery orchestrated by clergy. Under no clerical coercion, the *laypeople* assembled a bold offer to found Dr. Martin Luther College. The Lutherans of New Ulm both envisioned and realized an institution whose cultural weight redefined the *Turnerstadt*'s sources of intellectual authority.

The Minnesota River reversed course. God's Word would rule here.

The Minnesota Synod

At the 1883 Minnesota Synod convention, held June 13–19 at St. Paul's, New Ulm, C.J. Albrecht and Friedrich Boock—the local delegates—presented their plan for a Minnesota Synod institution with an offer of land and $4000 toward the project. Synod proceedings from the

128. Pfaender, "Festrede," *New Ulm Post*, 11 September 1868.

129. Pfaender, "Festrede," *New Ulm Post*, 11 September 1868.

convention detailed their proposal and the resolutions passed after the proposal, which had inspired the synod to "call such an institution to life" as a memorial to Martin Luther on the 400th anniversary of his birth. The synod defined the institution's purpose, stipulated that construction not start until $14,000 had been pledged, elected officers to oversee the project, and allowed other congregations to assemble competing offers until September 15:

> By means of its pastor (C.J. Albrecht) and delegate (Friedrich Boock), the congregation in New Ulm presented to the synod how desirable and necessary it would be to have an institution in our synod at which young people could be prepared for the service of the church or receive a Christian education, and at the same time made the synod the offer to donate to it the land[130] needed and about $4000 for construction, if it erected such an institution in New Ulm. After lengthy and thorough deliberation on this matter, in which it became apparent that it was very much desired on all sides to call such an institution into life, and that in just this year, the 400th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Luther, a serious attempt should be made, since such an institution would not only be the best memorial we could erect to Dr. M. Luther, but we could also in an appropriate way demonstrate our gratitude to God for the great benefits He showed to His church and also us through Dr. M. Luther, so the synod passed the following resolutions:
>
> 1. The proposed institution should be a secondary school (*Progymnasium*) connected with an academy (*Akademie*), and erected for at least fifty students, that is, so that at least that many can live in it.
> 2. The institution is to be decidedly Christian and have an Evangelical Lutheran character, in which for that reason *all* students are to be obligated to take part in the religious instruction.
> 3. The pastors and delegates are to encourage their congregations to contribute willingly and abundantly for erecting and maintaining such an institution.
> 4. A collector is to be chosen to gather money and subscriptions for this purpose. Instead of *one* collector *three* collectors were later appointed, namely, for the first synodical district Pastor A. Opitz; for the second synodical district Pastor Ch. Bender; and for the third synodical district Pastor H. Dagefoerde. Nevertheless, these collectors should only go where they are desired. A written petition about this matter is also to be composed, published in the *Gemeindeblatt*, and distributed in 2000 printed leaflets in the synodical congregations.

130. The land the New Ulm delegation initially proposed in 1883 would not become the ultimate site of the college. A *New Ulm Post* article dated November 16, 1883, described "a very attractive site, located at the former windmill" as the land first chosen for the college. The windmill was on the city's south side, not far from the present-day St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church ("[College Site at Windmill]," *New Ulm Post*, 16 November 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC [1883–1893], File 17, Drawer 1, M14362, Martin Luther College Archives, New Ulm, MN). See fig. 8 for an 1870 view of New Ulm that depicts the windmill noted here.

5. The building will only be begun when the amount needed for this ($14,000) has been subscribed and at least half has been paid to the building committee. The money which has come in remains in the building fund until the total amount is achieved.
6. Equal opportunity is to be given to all synodical congregations to make offers to the synod regarding the institution. If by September 15 better all-around offers are made from somewhere else than New Ulm has already made, the committee is to inform the congregations of this and decide according to the majority of votes which come in.

[7.] Pastors O. Hoyer, C. J. Albrecht, and L. Frey, along with Mr. F. J. Walther, Mr. W. Lindecke, Mr. F. Bock, [*sic*] and M. W. Roehmke [*sic*] are to be the building committee, which has the right and the duty to undertake the building and carry it out according to the instructions given to the best of their knowledge and belief. The local pastor of the congregation where the institution is built is also to be a member of this committee. If he does not already belong to the members chosen for the committee, then in addition to him a member familiar with building is to be chosen from his congregation, so that the number of committee members is again uneven.[131]

Before the New Ulm college, the Minnesota Synod had no educational institution of its own. Founded in 1860, when six pastors gathered under the leadership of J.C.F. Heyer, the synod used the St. Chrischona mission house in Switzerland, where C.J. Albrecht trained, as its main source of ministers. In 1864, the synod entered an informal agreement with the Wisconsin Synod to use their Watertown institution for education, while Heyer helped raise funds for this school among Lutherans in Pennsylvania. The Minnesota-Wisconsin relationship strengthened when, in 1871, Minnesota accepted a formal offer from Wisconsin to use their institution, agreeing to pay $500 toward the professor's salary at Watertown.[132] However, at their 1875 convention,

131. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1883, 476–78. The building committee represented an evenly distributed geography. Hoyer, Walther, and Lindecke came from the Twin Cities. Albrecht, Boock (here, "Bock"), and Ruemke (William Ruemke, here, "Roehmke") came from New Ulm. Frey came from Stillwater and was Albrecht's brother-in-law. Note that the committee was *not* made responsible for deciding where to place the institution. This authority was given to the congregations at the 1883 convention (see Resolution #6). In November 1883, a synod-wide vote produced a 19-5 result in favor of New Ulm over Shakopee.

132. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1885, 518–23. The Minnesota and Wisconsin Synods also formally recognized doctrinal fellowship in 1871 and agreed to use the Wisconsin Synod *Gemeindeblatt* as the official periodical for both synods. In 1872, Minnesota and Wisconsin became charter members of the Synodical Conference.

Minnesota regretfully acknowledged that it could not fulfill its end of the agreement due to the economic ruin wrought by the locust plague.[133]

Meanwhile, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod had offered the Minnesota Synod free use of its institutions. Minnesota students made full use of this privilege, even during the 1871–75 agreement with Wisconsin, and again after 1880, when Wisconsin again offered use of its institutions under no further obligation—except that Minnesota support the schools to the best of its ability.[134] The Minnesota Synod desired to train its own ministers and provide an education for its young people, but the small church body[135] had never moved to develop its own institution. At the 1883 convention, Albrecht and Boock presented a grassroots vision.[136]

The New Ulm proposal invigorated the Minnesota Synod. After years of lacking an in-state option for either secondary or ministerial education, a member congregation suddenly provided both the vision and substantial means to establish one. That the bid came from New Ulm, the city of anti-church freethought, bordered on the miraculous. In fulfillment of the fourth resolution, an August 1883 *Gemeindeblatt* article, signed by O. Hoyer, A. Opitz, and M.

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133. In a history presented at the 1885 convention, Albert Kuhn stated that the synod had not been able to comply "on the one hand because of the lack of means, and on the other hand because a large part of our field was itself in need of support on account of the locust plague. The dissolution of this relationship filled the synod with deep sorrow" (Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1885, 520).

134. In 1880, the Wisconsin Synod had a preparatory- and college-level institution in Watertown and a seminary in Milwaukee.

135. Demographic data on early Minnesota Synod membership are difficult to find. It appears the synod included thirty congregations in 1884, according to comments Albrecht made in convention (Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 497). Edward C. Fredrich, a Wisconsin Synod historian and professor, offered an 1892 reference point in *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*: "By 1892 the Minnesota Synod had grown to 16,594 communicants in 89 congregations and 18 preaching places served by 62 pastors; there were 64 schools and 14 called teachers" (Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans: A History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger* [Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1992], 25).

136. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1885, 518–23; Fredrich, *Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, 22–25; Zich, *Geschichte*, 168.

Tirmenstein, lauded the unlikely New Ulm offer as "an unmistakable sign from God," one that inspired immediate action:

> Now, dear brothers and sisters… whereas it is necessary to establish an institution whose purpose is to preserve the pure teaching of God's Word for our children and grandchildren… let us immediately set to work with earnestness and zeal, and make a willing sacrifice… so that the necessary sum may be raised quickly and the laying of the foundation may begin. The first step has already been made. New Ulm has offered our synod a construction site and $4,000 if the institution is built there. *Who would have thought before that such an offer might ever come from there?* Surely you also see in this, as we do, an unmistakable sign from God. But may God, to whose glory this institution is also to serve, make your hearts willing and ready for this work.[137]

Location

Following the New Ulm congregation's *Lehranstalt* proposal, the Minnesota Synod extended equal opportunity to all member congregations, allowing each to submit proposals to host the institution in their city. They had until September 15, 1883, to assemble offers; ultimately, Shakopee[138] assembled the only viable alternative to the New Ulm bid.

This paper examines a persistent claim concerning New Ulm's campaign for the Minnesota Synod college. It has been repeated in both oral and written histories of the Wisconsin Synod that, before the Minnesota Synod could vote on the location of the *Lehranstalt*, construction began in New Ulm, thereby forcing the synod to keep the institution there. This claim is false; it does not withstand scrutiny. It is a myth. A synthesis of Minnesota Synod proceedings, Brown County property records, local newspaper reports, and meeting minutes

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137. O. Hoyer, A. Opitz, and M. Tirmenstein, "Beschlüsse der ev.-luth. Synode von Minnesota und anderen Staaten betreffs Errichtung einer Lehranstalt," *Gemeindeblatt* 18, no. 24 (15 August 1883): 188 (emphasis added), http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4396.

138. The *St. Johannes-Gemeinde*, Shakopee, which seems to have assembled this competing bid, is unrelated to present-day Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod churches in Shakopee. Based on its absence in later Minnesota Synod Proceedings, the congregation appears to have dissolved or left the synod by 1888.

from at least one Twin Cities congregation establishes a timeline that decisively refutes this narrative. At no point does the record suggest that New Ulm forced the synod to place the college in the city. Rather, the evidence reveals a spirited contest between New Ulm and Shakopee, in which a compelling New Ulm offer—one drawing on both the determination of the laypeople and their new pastor's organizational leadership—ultimately secured the college.

The New Ulm delegation first proposed the institution to the synod during the June 13–19, 1883, convention in New Ulm. At that point, the congregation offered land and capital for the *Lehranstalt*.[139] Following the convention, articles from local newspapers served as a public local record of the campaign and established a chronology of the college's construction, which began in February 1884, months after New Ulm was selected to host the institution.

After earlier mentions of the college effort on April 27, June 1, and June 15, 1883, the *New Ulm Post* returned to the topic on June 22 to report on the 1883 convention. It confirmed that the question of location remained open and even curbed the premature enthusiasm of a writer from the *New Ulm Review*:

> To give other locations the opportunity to apply for the location of the institution, the synod will make its decision on the place where it is to be built on September 15 of this year.
>
> As far as the selection of the location is concerned, the committee in question should not be guided solely by financial considerations, which we understand to mean that it is not only the larger or smaller sum offered by one spot or another that should be taken into account, but also other considerations (the location of the place, health conditions, and other accommodations).
>
> For the time being, New Ulm has been chosen as the site where the institution is to be built, provided that no more favorable offers come from elsewhere or that nothing better can be expected.
>
> We can now look forward to the further development on this matter, which is certainly of great interest to our city. Finally, it should be noted that the local city, whose residents have made a very generous contribution of $3,000, as we have heard, has a

139. Had construction also begun by the 1883 convention, the synod would surely have been offended by the presumption and recorded its objection. It would not have opened the opportunity to other congregations, nor elected C.J. Albrecht synod president at the same meeting—as it did.

> good chance of seeing the institution established in its midst, even if the statement of the Contemporary [?] of the *Review*, based on an error, says "he is authorized to say, that the institution in question should *without a doubt* be located in this city." This is not correct.
>
> If this were the case, the above-mentioned decision of the synod to give other places the opportunity to apply for the institute by September 15 of this year would make no sense and would be an empty phrase.[140]

Months later, a September 7 *Post* article anticipated the decision of the synod and noted growing momentum in Shakopee:

> The time is coming when the Lutheran Synod will make a final decision about the construction of its proposed institution (*Gymnasium*). So far, there is still every prospect that it will be located in this city, where a very considerable sum (between three and four thousand dollars) has been pledged for the undertaking. However, recently Shakopee has been making strenuous efforts to have the institution built there.[141]

After the decision was delayed past September 15,[142] a September 21 *Post* article described the Shakopee bid and remarked on the persistent efforts of St. Paul's laypeople:

> The decision on where in Minnesota the Lutheran Synod's planned *Gymnasium* should be built is set to be made in the next few days. As is well known, local citizens have shown their support for the undertaking by pledging a very generous contribution of $3,000 and several hundred dollars. However, Shakopee has recently entered the race with an offer of $3,000 in cash and a well-located 10-acre plot of land worth $2,000. Apart from the bonus, there are many other reasons why this city has been recommended as a location for the aforementioned institute, so there is still great hope that New Ulm will be chosen, and the local members of the Lutheran congregation are making every effort to ensure that this happens. It would be a gain in many respects if the institution were to come here. The recent fundraisers are said to have increased the local bonus to $6,000.[143]

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140. "[College Proposed to Minnesota Synod]," *New Ulm Post*, 22 June 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

141. "[Strenuous Efforts in Shakopee]," *New Ulm Post*, 7 September 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

142. The *Post*, in a September 28 article, offered an explanation for the delay: "The decision on where in our state the Lutheran college should be built has been postponed for a few weeks because the wishes of the individual Lutheran congregations of Minnesota must first be heard. The pledges made for the benefit of the institute now amount to the tidy sum of $7,000" ("[College Location Decision Postponed]," *New Ulm Post*, 28 September 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC [1883–1893]).

143. "[St. Paul's Makes Every Effort]," *New Ulm Post*, 21 September 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

A final decision would not arrive until November 1883. As the competition intensified, a Shakopee resident attacked the New Ulm bid, arguing that the city was an unsuitable place for the institution on account of its "60, yes sixty, saloons." A *Post* article, dated October 26, 1883, challenged the accusation:

> A Mr. Hermann Schroeder from Shakopee has announced in a communication to the *Germania* to the astonished world that there are 60, yes sixty, saloons in New Ulm. He concluded that, for this reason, the planned Lutheran institution (*Gymnasium*) should by no means be built in this city, but rather in quiet Shakopee, which has only 17 saloons. The good man really let his tongue run away with him. If he had been interested in telling the truth, he could easily have been better informed and learned that the number of saloons in New Ulm is only 30, that is, exactly half. Drugstores and grocery stores that sell liquors in large quantities are, of course, not included in the 17 saloons of Shakopee. In his eagerness to win the institution for Shakopee, the said Mr. Schroeder also fails to take into account that New Ulm is a much larger and livelier place than Shakopee.[144]

Minnesota Synod congregations began casting their votes for the location of the *Lehranstalt* by the beginning of November. Council minutes from the St. John congregation in St. Paul, Minnesota, detail the final offers of New Ulm and Shakopee and St. John's preference for the New Ulm location. From the Twin Cities congregation's November 5, 1883, meeting:

> The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss and vote where the congregation wishes the seminary to be built, since two cities had offered compensation, namely: 1) New Ulm offered 7,000.00 and a piece of land consisting of 11 acres. 2) Shakopee offered 4,000.00 cash and 10 acres of good land. This was discussed, and it was decided that we consider New Ulm as the best place. These offers had come in writing, namely the one from New Ulm was printed in the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, and the one from Shakopee came in writing through the mail to the congregation. The secretary was charged to notify the president of our Synod, P.C.J. Albrecht, immediately.[145]

The *New Ulm Review* announced the final tabulation in an article published November 21, 1883. The paper reported on a November 15, 1883, meeting of the "board of directors and building

144. "[Sixty Saloons]," *New Ulm Post*, 26 October 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

145. Minutes, Church Council Meeting, November 5, 1883, "Minutes–Church Council 1871–1928," St. John Lutheran Church Archives, St. Paul, MN.

committee" of the Minnesota Synod, at Shakopee, which counted the congregations' votes 19-5 in New Ulm's favor. The article included an early reference to the mansard roof Gothic Revival design of the college (present-day Old Main), drafted by architect and St. Paul's member Herman Schapekahm, and the reported desire to start construction immediately:

> At a meeting of the board of directors and building committee of the German Lutheran synod of Minnesota last Thursday, at Shakopee, the votes of several congregations for the location of the proposed college were canvassed, with the following result: For New Ulm, 19; for Shakopee, 5. The plan and specifications presented by Herman Shapekahm [*sic*] of this city were adopted. The building will be of brick, ground space 60x90 feet, three stories and mansard roof, with steeple. The height of the building from the foundation to the top of the steeple will be about 90 feet. The first story, or basement, will be used for cooking and dining purposes, the second for school rooms and living rooms for the faculty, the third for dormitory and lecture room. Mr. E.G. Koch of this city was appointed assistant treasurer, and all funds appropriated for the college will pass through his hands. Although a resolution was adopted at the synod meeting in this city last summer that ground should not be broken until $7,000 had been paid in and an additional $7,000 subscribed, the resident members of the building committee propose to go right ahead and commence excavating and hauling stone. It is proposed to have everything in readiness for the masonry at the opening of the season next spring.[146]

The "resident members of the building committee" clarified their plan in an article submitted to the *New Ulm Post* on November 30, 1883. At this time, their intention was to begin construction only once the synod-required funding had been raised:[147]

> Following a decision by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Minnesota, which held its meeting here this summer, the planned institution (*Gymnasium*) that will now be built here can only be started once the required sum of $14,000 has been pledged and half of this amount has been paid to the treasurer of the building fund. The building committee therefore kindly requests all those who have signed up for contributions to pay their pledged sums to the treasurer, E.G. Koch. This would save the committee a great deal of effort and the construction could undoubtedly be started in a short time, so that the institution can be opened by September 1, 1884.

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146. "[Minnesota Synod Votes to Locate Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm]," *New Ulm Review*, 21 November 1883, in "Dr. Martin Luther College—Newspaper Notes of its Development," New Ulm–DMLC General History (24-3), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN.

147. At a December 1883 meeting in St. Paul, the building committee and Minnesota Synod officials agreed to begin construction before $14,000 had been raised, disregarding the synod requirement. By February 1884, construction had begun.

> On behalf of the building committee
> F. Book [*sic*]
> W. Ruemke
> E.G. Koch
> C.J. Albrecht[148]

The submitted article also underscored the remarkably short timeline given by the Minnesota Synod for the college's construction. The location of the college was chosen on November 15, 1883. By September 1, 1884—just ten months away—its doors were to be open.

Construction

Once New Ulm had secured the location of the college, challenges to its construction quickly confronted the synod building committee. First, the site the New Ulm delegation had proposed for the college, on the city's south side,[149] could not be secured when opportunistic landowners raised their prices on needed adjacent lots. A December 14, 1883, *Post* article exposed the issue:

> The construction of the Lutheran institution, which was to begin immediately, has encountered unexpected difficulties. A beautifully situated site at the former windmill,

148. "[Construction to Start Soon]," *New Ulm Post*, 30 November 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

149. It is difficult to determine the exact location of this first-proposed site. Sources mention the site as sitting near a windmill on the south side of New Ulm and the former Union Hospital, which stood on the site of the present-day Minnesota Valley Funeral Home on South Broadway Street. Reporting on the aforementioned double jubilee of C.J. Albrecht, the *Brown County Journal* stated:

> [The ultimate site of the college] was proffered after an unsuccessful attempt to purchase a city block in the south end of town, near the present Union hospital grounds. Seven lots—or one-half of the block—had been purchased, but the owners of the other seven lots demanded exorbitant prices for their property, on some of which a clear title could not be obtained, and that site was abandoned, although the seven lots originally purchased and donated to the synod by the local congregation are still in possession of the synod at this time ("Double Jubilee of Rev. C. J. Albrecht," *Brown County Journal*, 25 August 1924).

A January 2026 search through the property records of Brown County revealed seven lots that appear to have been willed to St. Paul's by a Lutheran land agent, who died in 1901. The seven lots sit between Eighth and Tenth Streets South, and South State and Broadway Streets, some contiguous, others not. The land agent appears to have reserved the lots as part of the New Ulm college bid. Then, when adjacent lot owners made the site impossible, the land agent willed these seven lots to St. Paul's (Brown County Recorder's Office, property records, New Ulm, MN).

> about a mile from the city center, had been chosen for the building. The building lots there have been of very little value until now because they are too far from the residential and commercial parts of the city. Nevertheless, some lot owners are seeking to profit from the opportunity and are now demanding a price that they would not otherwise be able to obtain under any circumstances at present, and probably not for a number of years to come. The building committee has therefore decided to look for another building site, and if they find one, as it appears they will, the lot owners at the windmill may have to wait a long time before they receive a price that even approaches the current offer.[150]

Unbothered, the building committee secured a superior site for the college by a land donation from E.G. Koch, treasurer of the committee and member of St. Paul's. His four-acre lot offered a pastoral setting atop New Ulm's river bluffs, endowing the future college with a parklike oak savanna environment and a magnificent view of the Minnesota Valley. Brown County property records attest that, on January 31, 1884, ownership of Outlot 321 transferred from E.G. Koch to "The Trustees of the Evangelische Lutherische Synode of Minnesota" for a sum of $100.00.[151]

With the college site secure, the synod building committee—eager to build—soon faced financial complications to construction. At a meeting in the city of St. Paul in December 1883, the committee and Minnesota Synod officials had unanimously adopted a plan to start construction even if, as the committee reported to the 1884 synod convention, "some thousand dollars were lacking or not yet subscribed."[152] Excavation for the college began in February

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150. "[Unexpected Difficulties at Windmill Site]," *New Ulm Post*, 14 December 1883, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

151. E.G. Koch to Trustees of the Evangelische Lutherische Synode of Minnesota, Warranty Deed, 31 January 1884, Outlot 321, City of New Ulm, Book 23D, p. 526; Abstract of Title, Book 5, p. 153, Brown County Recorder's Office, New Ulm, MN. The 1858 Prignitz city plan designated this lot—and all lots that make up the present-day college—as one of hundreds of garden outlots offered to New Ulm's early residents. The first college parcel, Outlot 321, passed from the *Turner*-led German Land Association to a Friedrich Lichtenfels of Newark, New Jersey (likely an investor in the *Turner* colonization effort), before the Koch family purchased the property in 1874 (Brown County Recorder's Office, property records, New Ulm, MN).

152. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 497–98. So—financially—the construction of the college did "jump the gun," because the $14,000 had not yet been raised. Construction began months after the Minnesota Synod decided to place its institution in New Ulm, so the jump does not relate to the location of the

1884, almost immediately after the land transfer from Koch, even though the $14,000 stipulated by the June 1883 convention had not yet been fully raised. Fundraising efforts, including a local civic campaign by the New Ulm residents of the building committee,[153] had gathered pledges totaling over $12,000, including $7,551.21 in cash on hand.[154] However, when the building committee and synod officials received offers to build the college on April 23, 1884—two months after first excavation—they discovered that the building approved by the synod could not be built for under $16,000. They quickly passed a resolution to convene the synod in Red Wing on May 21–27, 1884, weeks earlier than the traditional mid-June date, to explain and address the financial situation.[155]

In Red Wing,[156] C.J. Albrecht, as president, entreated the synod first to fulfill its duty to raise up ministers from its midst. Bold against the uncertain financial situation at hand, he

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college. Nevertheless, this is most likely the source of the aforementioned myth. Again, this choice to jump the gun—financially—on construction was a unanimous decision made by the building committee and Minnesota Synod officials at a meeting in the city of St. Paul in December 1883.

153. *New Ulm Post* articles list names of local citizens and businesses who made contributions to the college effort; see, e.g., *New Ulm Post*, 18 January, 4 April, 18 April, 23 May 1884, New Ulm Post: Early History of DMLC (1883–1893).

154. These figures reflect the amount reported at the May 1884 synod convention. Note that the $7,551.21 cash on hand exceeds the amount of cash stipulated by the 1883 convention to begin construction (Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 497).

155. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 497–98.

156. Oral and written histories that have perpetuated the myth often assert that the Minnesota Synod was confronted at a synod convention in New Ulm by the unauthorized construction of their college, thereby compelling synod delegates to keep the institution there. Such an event is impossible. The only convention held during the college's construction (1884) took place in Red Wing. As stated above, the 19-5 synod-wide vote to locate the college in New Ulm was tabulated in Shakopee in November 1883, and the decision by the building committee and synod officials to begin construction before $14,000 had been raised was unanimously adopted in the city of St. Paul in December 1883. At the May 1884 Red Wing convention, the synod approved a new funding plan for an institution they, six months earlier, had voted 19-5 to locate in New Ulm. The synod had not yet visited the construction site but resolved to convene in New Ulm in 1885 to see the completed project.

announced that the synod's pastors had proposed to connect a pastoral seminary to the New Ulm institution and urged the synod to approve its creation:

> If our sons are now to be trained as workers in the vineyard of the Lord, then there must also be educational institutions. Just as it is a holy obligation of the parents to place their gifted sons into the service of the Lord, so it is also the holy obligation of the congregations and the synods to erect educational institutions in their midst. We have now also acknowledged this duty and for that reason passed the resolution at our synod convention last year to erect a secondary school connected with an academy for training young people; and I can still add to this that the general pastoral conference took a step further and resolved to propose to the next synod convention whether it would not be feasible to connect with the secondary school and the academy a practical educational institution for training preachers. This is what we need above all, because the workers in the harvest of the Lord are so few. O, may the faithful God give us all more and more joyful hearts and willing and active hands, so that we are faithful and diligent workers in His vineyard.[157]

Then, in a report on the developing institution, he justified the actions of the building committee. After noting that seventeen out of thirty Minnesota Synod congregations had not yet submitted financial contributions to the college effort, Albrecht cited the New Ulm congregation's exceeding generosity, the cost of labor, and the impending start date of class as factors in the decision to start construction early. He urged the synod to hasten the completion of the building project so that "the pure Word of God can be preached by a large crowd of evangelists and we can be God's helpers." Twelve young men were ready to enter the New Ulm institution as soon as it opened:

> According to the synodical resolution, the building committee has chosen to begin building the secondary school "when the amount needed for this ($14,000) has been subscribed and at least half has been paid to the building committee." So far thirteen congregations, including New Ulm, have subscribed over $12,000; the cash on hand, with the inclusion of the collections which have come in, is $7,551.21. Seventeen congregations have still not sent in any subscriptions.[158] Now, since the building committee with the officials of the synod at a meeting in St. Paul in December of last

157. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 495–96.

158. Thus, the building committee *had* collected more than the synod-required $7000 in cash but had not yet reached the required $14,000 total when cash and subscriptions were combined.

year, agreed to begin building even if some thousand dollars were lacking or not yet subscribed; and since the congregation in New Ulm has exceeded its original offer of $3000, which the synod could not take into consideration in its resolution last year; so in order to save money the building committee had the basement excavated already in February, when workers can be had for lower wages, and laid the foundation this spring, as well as making all the preparations so that the building will be ready late in the year and the course of instruction can begin. However, there are obstacles in the way which the building committee together with the officials of the synod could not clear away, and this is why at its last meeting on April 23 it passed the resolution to convene the synod convention earlier.

In particular, after the plan was unanimously adopted in December, the building committee was called together on April 24 of this year to learn how much the building would cost, since on that day the written offers for building were to be received. It now turned out that the building, in which according to the synodical resolution fifty students were to live, cannot be built according to the plan adopted for under $16,000. However, since the building committee only has $14,000 at its disposal and cannot adopt a plan for a smaller building,[159] the contract could not be issued without acting against the resolution of the synod. So the building committee is now placing the matter into the hands of the synod with the best hope that the synod—in firm confidence on God who has helped us so far beyond what we asked or imagined [Ephesians 3:20] and also will help us further—will give the committee further instructions, so that the building—for the spread of the kingdom of God and the maintenance of our dear Lutheran Church—is carried out so far this year that instruction can begin late in the year.

I would at the same time inform the synod that the pastoral conference at its meeting in Jordan last year passed the resolution to connect with the secondary school a practical preacher seminary, so that in a short time we can to a certain extent remedy the great lack of preachers in our synod. Now, since this very important resolution was passed by all the pastors with joy, I recommend that the synod also raise this to a resolution with joy.

Finally, I can still joyfully report to the synod that there are already twelve young men who are ready to enter the institution as soon as it is opened, in order to serve the Lord in His church. Should this prospect not fill us with great joy and heartfelt thanks to God and drive away all bleak thoughts? Let us see in this a sign from God and with joyful hearts go to our work. May the Lord grant all of us and all the congregations heartful joyousness for erecting this institution, so that in these last sorrowful times the pure Word of God can be preached by a large crowd of evangelists and we can be God's helpers.[160]

Albrecht also formally apologized on behalf of the building committee and asked the synod for pardon. The synod granted this and moved to raise the funds necessary to complete the

159. The foundations for the larger, synod-approved building had already been laid.

160. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 497–98.

project to the scale approved during the 1883 New Ulm convention. The delegates desired to see construction complete by fall 1884—but stressed that the building committee must not again deviate from synod resolutions. The 1884 Red Wing convention proceedings recorded their adjusted stipulations:

> The building of this institution has already begun, even though the amount established by the synod convention last year had at the time not yet been subscribed. Therefore, President C. J. Albrecht acknowledged also in the name of the building committee that they had overstepped the instructions of the synod, and in the name of the building committee asked the synod for pardon. This was granted. Now, because the question was brought to the synod convention, What should happen now? the synod passed the following resolutions: The amount to be gathered in the synod for the building comes to $18,000. The building committee is, to be sure, to continue with the building, but it can only complete it this fall if the established amount of $18,000 is subscribed by July 25 at least to within $1,500. The committee can borrow this $1,500. Therefore, collecting should be carried on diligently in the synod, for which in addition to the collectors appointed last year three more are added in President Albrecht, Pastors Schulze and Hoyer. All the collectors are obligated to make a report to the praesidium by July 25 on their work. The same is also to be true of the pastors who are themselves taking care of the collecting in their congregations. Finally, the building committee was by synodical resolution enjoined to follow exactly the instructions given by the synod in this matter.[161]

As directed, the building committee pressed forward with construction. On June 25, 1884,[162] 1,000 people gathered on the bluffs above the city to lay the cornerstone of the New Ulm college. Otto Hoyer's report to the *Gemeindeblatt* recorded the Lutherans' procession from church to college, an update on construction progress, and a summary of the two addresses spoken at the ceremony. The college's emerging architecture and "glorious location" above the valley left "all who set foot there for the first time… astonished" as they walked the campus:

> As it had been announced earlier, at 1 PM ringing a bell was the sign to gather. From all sides they now streamed to the church where the procession was organized, and at 1:30 PM with all the bells rung together the procession was set in motion. It was a majestic procession. At the lead was the Courtland trumpet section four abreast, then in buggies

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161. Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1884, 504.

162. The synod scheduled the cornerstone laying to coincide with June 25, the anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530 (Zich, *Geschichte*, 169).

the preachers, then around forty buggies with congregational members and festival guests from the vicinity of New Ulm, and joining in on foot a large number of members from New Ulm itself. With the festive sounds of a march they went on to the building site. New Ulm is picturesquely beautiful, located on four terraces or steps. The land donated to the synod is on the fourth terrace, sixteen acres of beautiful woods.[163] In the midst of this closest to the city in cleared woods the foundation walls of the college were set up and the first floor already begun. It could not be otherwise than that all who set foot there for the first time felt astonished, both because of the glorious location of the building and because of the building itself which rises solidly and elegantly from the ground. Groups of people could be seen everywhere whose attention was caught now by this now by that, for which they expressed approval. Finally, when the last of the procession had reached the hill, a crowd numbering a thousand people gathered on the first floor around the platform erected there, on which the festival preachers and the rest of the pastors had been assigned seats.

Up to now there had still been the threat of rain, but now there was a stronger wind which did not last long, but it broke up the clouds and the dear sun shone down on the delighted assembly. For this reason the hymn, "A mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty Shield and Weapon," sounded forth doubly joyously for the opening of the festivities. After three verses Pastor Tirmenstein had the opening prayer, in which he thanked the Lord our God who has helped us so far, and implored His further blessing. Then the chief speaker, Professor Graebner, came forward and read the text on which he based his address. It was 1 Samuel 16:11, which reads,

And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the boys?" He said, "There is still the smallest, and he is guarding the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him and have him fetched, for we will not sit down until he comes here."

The straining to hear the professor was great already before this, but it became much greater with the reading of the text, and many were asking themselves: How will this text be applied to the present occasion? But this soon became clear; the speaker pointed out with the help of the text what had to happen if the school built here was to become a place of abiding blessing. Specifically, not only are the arts and sciences to be pursued here, but above all He must come here and live here, He who is, to be sure, regarded by the world as Small, even as the Smallest, but is the Greatest and Most Glorious, who is none other than the Son of Jesse, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is also to come here, His Word is to be taught here, His Word is to rule here, and from the very first day on; then His blessing can and will not be lacking.

This was followed by a song from the choir and the chorale, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," after which the second festival address followed. Pastor L. Frey preached on the text, Psalm 118:21–25, in which he showed with powerful words what is the true foundation stone and cornerstone on which we want to found our Dr. Martin Luther

163. E.G. Koch later donated three additional lots to the college (Brown County Recorder's Office, property records, New Ulm, MN). This comment seems to suggest that Koch had already reserved those lots for the college at the time of its cornerstone laying.

> College, which naturally is none other than the stone which was rejected by the builders of this world, but made by God into the precious Cornerstone, Jesus Christ.[164]

Specifications

Herman Schapekahm, an architect and St. Paul's member, designed Dr. Martin Luther College after Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.[165] His construction company also built the structure, which housed the entire institution in its early history. The basement contained a kitchen, dining room, washroom, cellar, and housekeepers' rooms; the first floor held living quarters for a professor and two classrooms; the second floor hosted a study room and additional classrooms; and the top floor provided dormitories in four large bedrooms. The building was crowned by a three-story tower at its front; a mansard roof and large Gothic windows accentuated the red brick construction.[166]

According to the institution's 1884–85 catalog, in its first year the institution included—as prescribed by the 1883 New Ulm convention—a *Progymnasium* (college preparatory department) and an *Akademie* (academic department), the latter arranged "for those qualifying themselves for a thorough business life, or for higher studies."[167] Each began with one class of

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164. Hoyer, "Ecksteinlegung in New Ulm," 543–44.

165. Morton A. Schroeder, *A Time to Remember: An Informal History of Dr. Martin Luther College, 1884–1984* (New Ulm, MN: Dr. Martin Luther College, 1984), 20. Schapekahm studied architecture in St. Louis from 1878 to 1880, when he would have seen the former seminary building that inspired the New Ulm college's architecture.

166. E.R. Bliefernicht, *A Brief History of Dr. Martin Luther College* (New Ulm, MN, 1934), 23–24, copy held at Martin Luther College Library, New Ulm, MN. See fig. 28 for a photograph of the college building in 1885.

167. Bliefernicht, *A Brief History of Dr. Martin Luther College*, 28. Bliefernicht took this quote from the college's 1884–85 academic catalog.

students.[168] The preparatory department curriculum consisted of a three-year course with three years of religion, Latin, English, and German; one year of Greek; two years of arithmetic; one year of algebra; two years of history; one year of physiology; one year of geography; two years of drawing. The academic department offered a four-year course with religion, English, and German (as in the preparatory department), plus bookkeeping, civil government, political economy, commercial arithmetic, zoology, botany, chemistry, physics, logic, theory and practice of teaching, and French. The institution developed additional programs in its first years, adding a theological seminary department in 1885–86, a college department and an undefined "commercial department" in 1886–87, and, after students in the academic department expressed their desire to become teachers, a normal department in 1887–88.[169]

To assemble a faculty, the board of trustees called Gottfried Burk, a student at the Wisconsin Synod seminary, who accepted a position as professor. The board twice called Wisconsin's August Graebner as both professor and director, but he declined both times. In the interim, C.J. Albrecht became the first director. To fully satisfy the teaching shortage, A. Reim, a pastor from Sanborn, Minnesota, volunteered his services free of charge. By spring 1885, Otto Hoyer was appointed both professor and director.[170] While only eight students enrolled initially—the college could only announce its opening two weeks prior to dedication—enrollment quickly rose to forty-four by Easter.[171] When five qualified students presented

168. The *Progymnasium* class was designated "*Sexta*," in line with the German *Gymnasium* model.

169. Bliefernicht, *A Brief History of Dr. Martin Luther College*, 25, 32–34.

170. A. Reim was the son of Gottlieb Reim, pastor of St. Paul's, New Ulm (1870–82).

171. The 1884–85 catalog listed nine students in the *Sexta* class of the preparatory department and twenty-nine students in the academic department. The count of forty-four students perhaps included those who entered the institution but later withdrew their enrollment. Georg Boock, son of Friedrich and Maria Boock, was one of the first students in the academic department (Bliefernicht, *A Brief History of Dr. Martin Luther College*, 30).

themselves for higher-level theological training in the third quarter of the academic year, the planned theological seminary department opened in an unofficial capacity. C.J. Albrecht led the endeavor.[172]

A *Turner* Reaction

Seven years after the dedication of Dr. Martin Luther College, one freethinker issued a critical response to its presence in the *Turnerstadt*. In a lampoon against C.J. Albrecht and the students of the "New Ulm seminary," the writer demonstrated religious antagonism consistent with the vitriol of the *Neu-Ulm Pionier* and the self-assured philosophical confidence of Pfaender's 1868 *Turnfest* oration. Submitted in 1891 to *Arminia*, a freethinker newspaper published in Madison, Wisconsin, this correspondence from a New Ulm *Turner* activated such antagonism into a sarcastic, condescending attack on the college and its constituents.

The freethinker's mockery confirmed the success of Friedrich Boock's vision. Evidently, by 1891, the New Ulm college had begun to reorient the *Turnerstadt*'s intellectual and cultural life to a degree that frustrated Pfaender's 1868 predictions. The *Arminia* article demonstrates how this sociological shift scandalized one *Turner* writer, producing rhetoric that reads like the inner monologue of a polemicist minimizing a perceived threat to the status quo. The correspondence vividly illustrates Dr. Martin Luther College as a project born amid the ideological conflict that defined religious life in New Ulm. The full article is reproduced below:

172. Bliefernicht, *A Brief History of Dr. Martin Luther College*, 25–27; Langebartels, *Minnesota Synod Proceedings*, 1885, 525–26, 534–38.

From a somewhat extended correspondence:[173]

New Ulm, Minn., March ’91.

“See how times change, and we change with them!”[174]

New Ulm can rightly claim its title, the “black-red-gold” *Turnerstadt*,[175] at whose founding it declared: “Priests and lawyers are not allowed!”[176] But its most important industry at present is the manufacture of clergy (*Pfaffenfabrikation*), as there is a Lutheran seminary here, naturally to fill a deeply felt want.

A local *Turner*, a jovial brother, in a most cheerful mood threw out the question: “Why isn’t New Ulm called New Swabia?” The jokester![177]

Pastor Albrecht is from Swabia—not Friedrich Albrecht, the poetical speaker of the Free Congregation, who, coming from North Germany, took up the high guard of intellectual freedom in Ulm, and from there wrote to a friend:

> “And departing from the homeland,
> My heart devoted to the holy cause,
> I took up here on the banks of the Danube,
> With confident heart, the distant watch.
> Here I stand now and hold out,
> So far as my strength will carry me.
> Yet often I dream of my home
> And of the beautiful days of youth…
> Come, come! We will hand in hand
> Rejoice and have beautiful days:
> How beautiful it is in your Silesian land,

173. This is the title of the *Arminia* article (“Aus einer etwas erweiterten Correspondenz”). I have not found further correspondence, if it exists.

174. The freethinker invoked a Latin proverb to introduce New Ulm’s Lutheran cultural shift: *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis* (Times change, and we change with them).

175. Black, red, and gold were colors associated with the 1848 German Revolution, whose failure prompted freethinker “Forty-eighters”—many of whom were *Turner*—to flee to the United States, a nation that had already manifested their dream of liberal democracy (Prahl, “The Turner,” 85).

176. This statement is a sarcastic nod to the myth, believed by many outsiders, that the *Turner* had outlawed ministers and lawyers at New Ulm’s founding.

177. C.J. Albrecht was born and raised in Eschenau, a village near Swabia, a region in present-day southern Germany. The joke by the *Turner* spoke to the college’s growing influence in New Ulm.

But how beautiful is it here, too, with us in Swabia!"[178]

No, not this Albrecht is meant, but rather the Most Honorable Pastor Albrecht, that watchman of Zion and pious "servant of the Word"—not like his namesake Albrecht, who kindled the "Church Torch" (*"Kirchen-Fackel"*) on the Danube, would have been sent here. Truly, the torch of intellect is no less necessary in New Swabia than in Old Swabia![179]

Pastor Albrecht has—and who can blame him?—a special fondness for his countrymen, and so came over from across the river several full-blooded Swabians—mostly old men, by the way—as students of the sacred art of godly wisdom at the New Ulm seminary. We Swabians are—all the world knows, for who does not know our countrymen Schiller, Hegel, etc.?[180]—more timid than other people, and the God-fearing students were even more timid than their New Ulm professors. One in particular, a baptized Jew, bald and already 38 years old, was so timid around the others that they thought him mad. The jackasses!

And even Renz, not from the circus of that name,[181] but the Swabian Renz with his fiery eyes, who told how the Most Honorable Dean Bölter of Großingersheim had swindled his precious travel money.[182] May the good Lord forgive him for the Swabian pranks he played under the eyes of Magister Hoyer, that great scholar in the Lord. "Professor" Hoyer, as he grazed about Minnesota with the collection bag, heard many amusing stories from the pastors whose boys had seen the Swabian pranks of Renz and the baptized Jew at the seminary and had told them at home during the holidays. Deathly pale and with trembling legs he returned from his grazings. Renz finally received travel money and went to the seminary in Watertown, Wis., where he was solemnly ordained as a "servant of the Word of God" and then is said to have received a pastorate in Michigan.

Another Swabian, Abele, became a teacher here,[183] but had no luck running the school and is now said to be vegetating in Michigan as a "professor of music."

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178. Friedrich Albrecht (1818–1890) was a German writer active in Ulm (Swabia) in the mid-nineteenth century who was involved in the *Freireligiöse Bewegung* (Free Religious movement) and contributed to an associated Sunday paper named *Kirchenfackel*. Free congregations (*Freie-Gemeinden*) were congregations that organized apart from Germany's state churches. The Albrecht writing, a poem, is rendered here in literal translation.

179. This comment, directed at New Ulm ("New Swabia"), calls to mind Pfaender's critique of perceived spiritual slavery and clerical tyranny in his 1868 *Turnfest* oration.

180. German philosophers Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).

181. *Zirkus Renz* was a major German circus company, founded in Berlin in 1842 by Ernst Jakob Renz.

182. The reference to "Dean Bölter of Großingersheim" is unclear. Both the name and location are likely satirical inventions, designed to poke fun at Renz's apparently provincial origins.

183. Abele was the first teacher at St. Paul's school (Zich, *Geschichte*, 170).

Yes, how holy it is in Zion!

Once, the aspiring preachers returned from Holy Communion. They sat down at the table—in the most sanctimonious mood, of course—and behold, it wasn't long before the Spirit of God came upon one of them, and he struck another brother on the temple with a coffee cup, so that blood splattered all over the dining hall. This courageous warrior of God became the second parish schoolmaster a few weeks later, as it was assumed he was the real deal (*Wahre Jakob*), meant to instill respect in naughty boys. But that glory soon came to an end.

I recently read in *Lucifer*[184] that Freemasons, upon their initiation, must turn over all their money; the candidates of the sacred Lutheran art of godly wisdom fare no better. At least that is what the students imported from Germany told the caretaker in the most plaintive way, saying that the money they had brought was often taken from them in large sums as tuition and board fees, and yet they still had to beg and "collect" for themselves and the college.

I could tell many more stories about this holy fortress of Zion and those who practice black magic therein. They do not fear Fritz Schütz, but they do fear the *Turner*,[185] and their pious pastor, who had a large, comfortable house built for him by his poor congregation, once said in an Easter sermon that robbers, adulterers, arsonists, murderers, etc. were more pleasing to him than the heathen *Turner*.[186] Yes, they do not let themselves be so easily brainwashed by a tailor's apprentice who was hastily ordained as a preacher in seminary and knows how to rant about people of other faiths.[187]

The local Catholic priest, Berghold, was cut from a different cloth—no fanatic, but truly respectable and humane, and therefore respected even by the infidels. Of course, he had

184. *Lucifer* was another freethinker newspaper closely associated with *Arminia*.

185. Fritz Schütz (1833–1888) was a German freethinker who immigrated to the United States after the founding of the German Empire in 1871. He moved from Philadelphia to Milwaukee before settling in New Ulm, where he joined the *Turnverein* and preached rationalistic atheism ("Schuetz, Prof. Frederick," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN). The Schütz vs. *Turner* comment is intriguing. Perhaps the Lutherans "did not fear Fritz Schütz" because his teachings were an obvious affront to their faith, whereas the antagonism of the *Turner* was a subtler threat, veiled by their professed tolerance. In this framework, if Schütz was a wolf, the *Turner* were wolves in sheep's clothing.

186. Perhaps Albrecht said this, or the freethinker was merely building a satirical caricature of him.

187. Albrecht was almost certainly never a tailor's apprentice. This appears to be a formulaic freethinker put-down of clergy, suggesting that a seminary could transform any uneducated person into a ranting preacher. The writer employed this insult to diminish Albrecht's intellectual or academic credentials. See "[Against Religious Parents and Clergy]," *Neu-Ulm Pionier* (p. 32 above), for another use of this formula by a New Ulm *Turner*.

> to give way to the activities of the temperance-fanatic Archbishop of St. Paul,[188] who had long been held in high esteem. Many have said since then that the Catholic Jesuits are not nearly as bad as the Lutherans.[189]

The Dedication of the New Ulm College

After the June 1884 cornerstone laying, the college project progressed rapidly. By fall 1884, construction was complete. While the college opened two months later than the September date proposed by the 1883 convention, its successful launch only six months after the May 1884 emergency convention represented a remarkable logistical achievement. By November 1884, the excavation site on Outlot 321 had been transformed into Dr. Martin Luther College, the Minnesota Synod *Lehranstalt*: a stately Gothic Revival structure purpose-built for the theological formation of students by professors ready to educate them.

The college would redefine New Ulm. The city synonymous with freethought, agnosticism, and rationalism would soon, for a Lutheran church body, become synonymous instead with theological and ministerial formation. New Ulm would develop into a religious center of higher education, gathering cultural and intellectual capital on its highest terrace to serve the public proclamation of God's Word. In the generations to come, thousands of young men and women would enter the *Turnerstadt* to pursue public ministry in the Lutheran church. On November 9, 1884, C.J. Albrecht, Friedrich Boock, and the people of St. Paul's ascended the bluffs of the Minnesota Valley for the dedication of the New Ulm college:

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188. John Ireland, Catholic Archbishop of St. Paul (1888–1918), was known for his opposition to alcoholism and his promotion of Catholic assimilation into American society. He systematically removed clergy who preserved non-English languages in their parishes, including Berghold from his German-speaking New Ulm parish in 1890 (Hoisington, *German* Town, 82–83).

189. "Aus einer etwas erweiterten Correspondenz," *Arminia*, no. 13, 26 March 1891, File 16, Drawer 2, M13820, Martin Luther College Archives, New Ulm, MN.

"The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes" [Psalm 118:23], so we must boast as we look back over the festival lying behind us. It was a little over a year ago that our synod in confidence on God resolved to build, and now we have been able to hand the building over to God for His service. November 9 was designated for that, and November 10, Luther's birthday, for opening the institution.

The sun rose bright on Sunday; the Lord blessed us with a beautiful day. The festivities were to begin at 10 AM, but long before that a crowd numbering into the hundreds arrived at the college, and both spacious lecture halls were crammed full, and still the festive hosts came and filled both corridors and the rooms facing the lecture halls. The crowd which gathered for the festival was estimated to be nearly 2000. They had come from everywhere, preachers, teachers, and congregational members, not merely from the neighboring congregations, but also from Mankato, Belle Plaine, Jordan, New Prague, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Stillwater, and Red Wing. A delegate from the Minnesota and Dakota District of the honorable Missouri Synod was also present, Pastor Horst, in order to rejoice and thank God with us. Unfortunately, no one was present from the sister Synod of Wisconsin, so closely connected with us; this may, however, be ascribed to the circumstance that our festival took place on a Sunday, on which preachers cannot easily get away. At 10 AM the college bell, which had arrived just in time on Saturday evening, and very early on Sunday was brought into the tower, signaled the beginning. When that ended, the Courtland trumpet section began devoutly, and to these sounds the board of trustees and the building committee took their seats on the platform. Pastor Horst also found a place there. Now Hymn 35 was announced and with the sound of the trumpets the hymn of praise and thanks rang out powerfully, "All Glory be to God on High." The liturgical part of the worship service followed as usually done on Sundays. The wonderfully defiant Luther hymn, "A mighty Fortress is Our God" was the next hymn, which resounded through Martin Luther College, consecrating it. Now our esteemed president, highly deserving for our institution, Pastor J. Albrecht, took the podium and preached on the basis of Matthew 5:14–16. His theme was the following: "When will our Martin Luther College in truth be a city on a hill?" Answer: (1) When the true arts and sciences are taught and learned in it, and (2) when teachers and students also let their lights shine before people.

He explained clearly that it was nothing but slander when the church is made out to be hostile to the arts and sciences, since on the contrary the church of all times has been the guardian of the true arts and sciences which are in the service of God and serve to glorify the name of God. After the sermon, the writer of these lines formally installed our second professor, Candidate G. Burk, who was called chiefly for the academy. The benediction closed the morning service.

For some hours the dining hall was the most sought-out room, for here all guests were fed by means of the hospitality of the New Ulm congregation. The women and girls had their hands full with this. At four tables in the dining hall 120 were fed at the same time, and the tables had to be reset fully eight times. Meanwhile, others were going up and down the college stairs, for each guest wanted to examine the building; they were all happy with the beautiful building and its fine location and were full of praise for it.

At 2 PM another worship service was announced, this one in the church. The church was also crammed full, and all listened eagerly to the excellent sermon preached by Pastor Schulze of Mankato. On the basis of the text from Joshua 1:8–9 he answered

> the question: "When will our institution not lack success and blessing? in this way: (1) When those who look after its success do this confidently and with fearless courage, and (2) when God's Word has and retains the highest authority in our institution." Would that his sincere admonition was taken to heart by all the synodical guests now also as one man confidently and fearlessly to see to the maintenance of this institution.
>
> By God's grace our dear Minnesota Synod also has its own educational institution. This is a completely unfamiliar idea for us. Before this, we had to go begging, as it were, at other educational institutions, to be sure, only in the interest of the kingdom of God which we are seeking to build here in Minnesota. In such a case, however, begging is not a very pleasant matter. Now, however, God's undeserved goodness has given us an institution, and we can again serve those who have so kindly served us with their institutions.
>
> May the good God abundantly bless our Martin Luther College, so that it may contribute to spreading our dear Lutheran Church here in the Northwest.[190]

At the dedication, the prehistory of the New Ulm college ended, and its history began. That evening, St. Paul's choir performed for the first guests of the new college in the city below.[191] Then all went home again. It was a school night. Class started the next day.[192]

190. Otto Hoyer, "Einweihung des Martin Luther Colleges [Dedication of Martin Luther College]," *Gemeindeblatt* 20, no. 7 (December 1, 1884): 53–54, translated by James Langebartels, in *Minnesota Synod Proceedings 1860–1885* (Self-published, 2026), 546–48, copy held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Mequon, WI.

191. Hoyer, "Einweihung des Martin Luther Colleges," 548. See fig. 28 for an 1885 photograph of Dr. Martin Luther College. See figs. 29 and 30 for twenty-first-century photographs of Martin Luther College.

192. Class began on November 10, the birthdate of Martin Luther (1483–1546).

CONCLUSION

The story of the New Ulm college begins in its city. The abundant natural resources and picturesque setting of its location brought two independent groups of German immigrants to settle the Minnesota Valley during the nineteenth century. The *Turner*, who comprised the second and much larger of these groups, established a community that embodied their ideal of Practical Turnerism. A beautiful city with a rich cultural and intellectual life, the *Turnerstadt* also became synonymous with rationalism, freethought, and agnosticism.

This environment shaped the Lutherans of New Ulm, some of whom predated the *Turner* in the valley, inspiring and challenging them to establish themselves, too. As the city grew, the Lutherans planted institutions that embodied and preserved their theology against the dominance of the *Turnverein*. Early efforts were conventional, but their context was exceptional. Before an intellectual elite who openly opposed organized religion, they raised a modest church building; in the heart of New Ulm stood their simple, bold testimony. Like Paul at the Areopagus, the Lutherans of the *Turnerstadt* asserted that God was knowable. The freethinker ruling class sneered, yet the small congregation dared to preach Christ and the resurrection.

The New Ulm college grew from these circumstances, an idea realized by St. Paul's congregation with the support of the Minnesota Synod. The people's vision and drive are well understood from the collective Lutheran experience typified by the individual Friedrich Boock, who resolved to ensure that God's Word prevailed in the city. The pioneer Lutheran arrived in New Ulm before the *Turner*, settled the *Turnerstadt*, and survived the Dakota War of 1862 before hosting St. Paul's 1865 charter meeting in his home. Emerging from the 1873–77 locust plague and the 1881 tornado that destroyed the first church, Boock voiced his dream for the

college soon after the 1882 dedication of the second church. Perhaps he stood in St. Paul's newer, higher sanctuary—built with the aid of Lutherans from around the country—and began to imagine what else might be possible through synodical collaboration. Engaging the new pastor, C.J. Albrecht, and securing the sponsorship of the Minnesota Synod, Boock and his St. Paul's congregation both envisioned and championed the New Ulm college, whose cultural and intellectual weight redefined the ideological character of the city.

As the *Turnerstadt* enters its eighth generation, I record a few memories and impressions of the city as a witness to and member of its seventh generation. The city of Albrecht and Boock, Nix and Pfaender, is beautiful. In winter New Ulm would settle into the valley the way only revealed when leaves fell and white blanketed the hills. Frost coated branches in the city's darker nights, yet you could still trace its four ascending tiers when snow held the moonlight. On Christmas Eve the people of St. Paul's sang hymns in harmony from their sanctuary above downtown. Together they announced the birth of Christ, the Creator of the Stars of Night, now lying in a manger. The Lutherans of New Ulm, their churches and schools, their college and chapel, proclaimed his name and that the Light of Gentile Nations shone also on this valley.

Last spring I returned to New Ulm. My family and friends, we picnicked in the park and walked its streets and hills. At a *Biergarten* among neighbors we heard news from our sister in Ulm, where New Ulm had sent her on cultural exchange. The people and the *Gemütlichkeit*, the civic pride in a city born of vision and ideology shape the present of a thoroughly American *Turnerstadt*. One evening a drive took my brother and me into the valley, across the Minnesota River, and up to the old Fort Road. The prairie pavement paled against dark, heavy soil on either side. The view ahead was limitless. Over St. George the sky opened in red and gold and blue. Our God spared us no splendor. The oaks and the cottonwoods were green again.

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APPENDIX



Figure 1. Seth Eastman, *Ballplay of the Dakota on the St. Peters River in Winter*, 1848, oil on canvas, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Acquisition in memory of Mitchell A. Wilder, Director, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, 1961–1979, accession no. 1979.4. Dakota ball play on the Minnesota River (historically known as the St. Peter's River), frozen in winter. The Dakota maintained a village at the confluence of the Cottonwood and Minnesota Rivers prior to the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux.



Figure 2. Christian F. & Wilhelmine Boock, 1871, photograph, private collection of Gerald and Darcy Boock, River Falls, WI. Friedrich Boock (1826–1888), here with his second wife, Wilhelmine Boock (née Plath), was a German immigrant wagonbuilder who helped found New Ulm as a member of the Chicago Land Society. An early leader in the city's Lutheran community, he hosted the charter meeting of St. Paul's congregation at his home in 1865 and later proposed the institution that became Dr. Martin Luther College, established 1884.

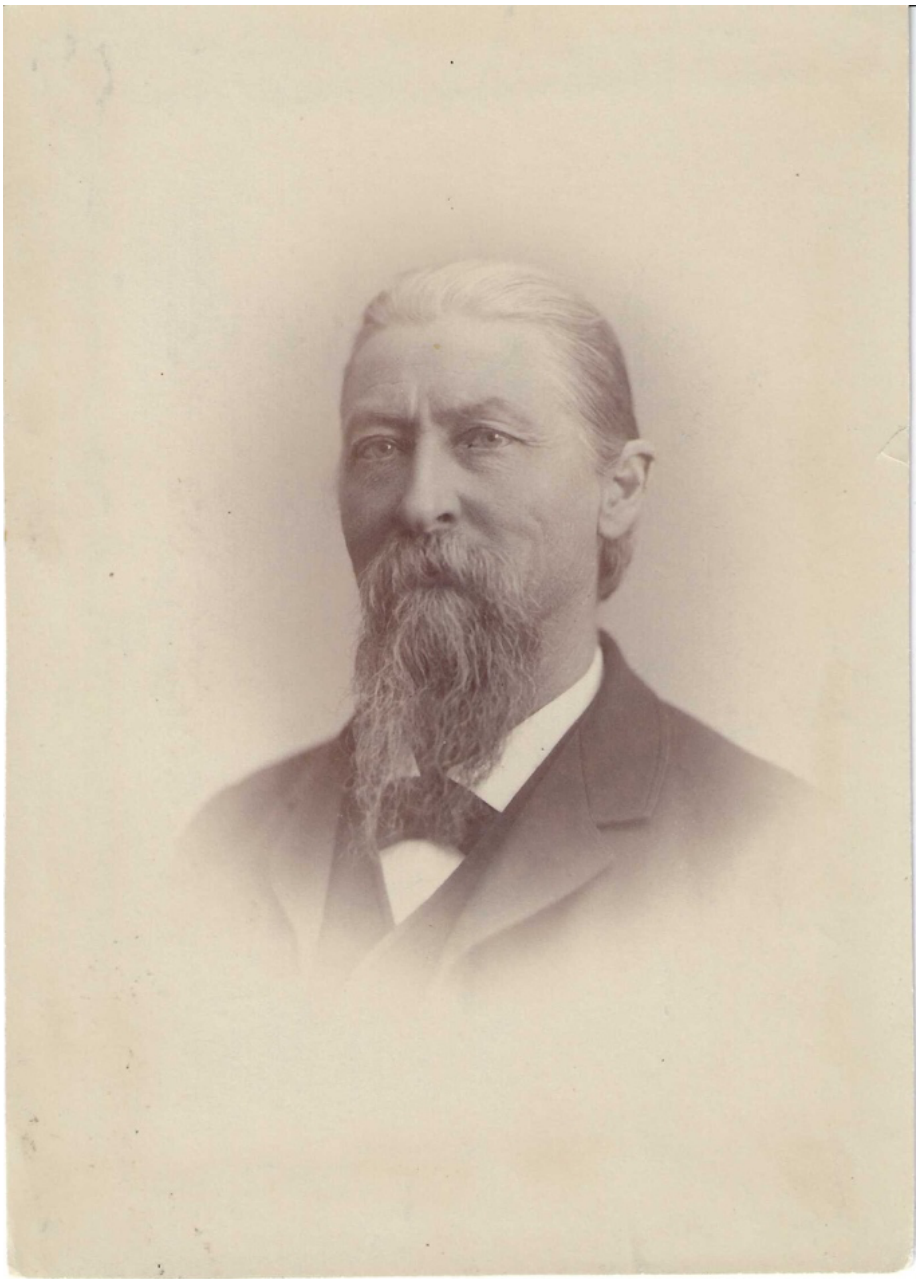


Figure 3. [Portrait of William Pfaender], photograph, n.d., "Pfaender, William," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. William Pfaender (1826–1905) was a German immigrant Forty-eighter who envisioned the *Turnerstadt*, a colony safe from the nativist persecution that the *Turner* suffered in eastern cities. Cooperating with the Chicago Land Society (non-*Turner*), Pfaender and over 1,000 *Turner* transformed the ideological character and physical design of New Ulm to furnish a "secure existence" for the freethinkers.

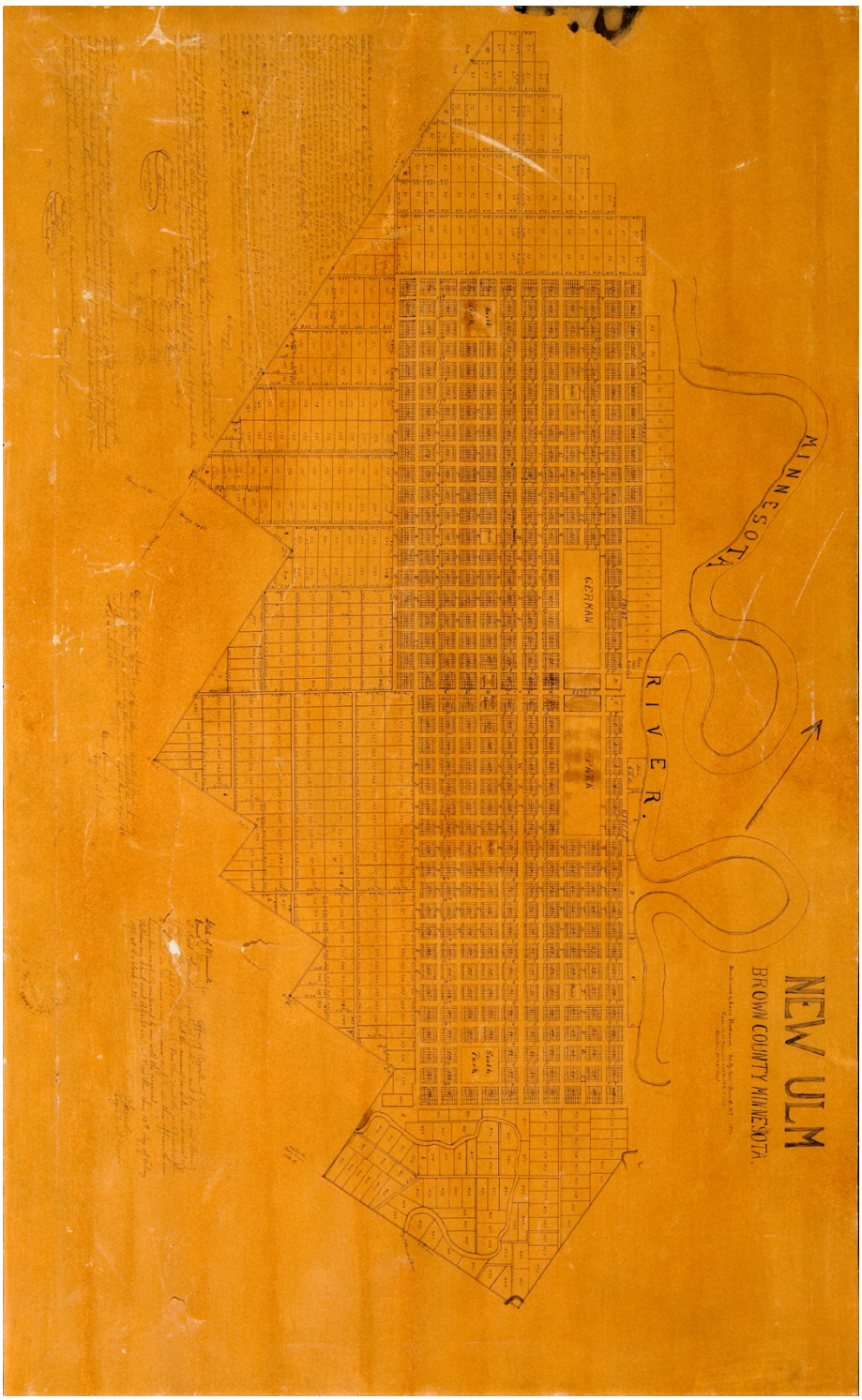


Figure 4. Christian Prignitz, [New Ulm, Brown County, Minnesota], 1858, plat, copied by unknown, 1896, Brown County Recorder's Office, New Ulm, MN. The 1858 New Ulm city plan, designed by Christian Prignitz, manifested *Turner* ideals.



Figure 5. J. Berndt, *Ansicht von New Ulm, Minnesota, 1860*, lithograph, lithographed by Ehrgott, Forbriger & Co., published by Nägele, Gerstenhauer & Co., 1860, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, G4144 .N4 A3 1860 .B4 c.2. This lithograph by Julius Berndt, a *Turner* architect and drafter who later designed New Ulm's Hermann Monument, provides an 1860 view of the settlement.



Figure 6. Anton Gág, *Attack on New Ulm during the Sioux Outbreak August 19th–23rd 1862*, 1904, oil on canvas, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, AV1990.32.2. This painting by Anton Gág, an artist from New Ulm's German-Bohemian community, depicts New Ulm under siege during the Dakota War of 1862. On August 19 and 23, 1862, Dakota warriors attacked the settlement in the First and Second Battles of New Ulm.



Figure 7. Turner Hall at the time of the Turnfest in 1868, photograph, 1868, Turner Hall—Society Buildings File (19-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. A group of *Turner*, most dressed in white, in front of New Ulm's second *Turnhalle* during the 1868 *Turnfest*. At this *Turnfest*, William Pfaender delivered an oration that prophesied the triumph of freethought over organized religion—a victory as inevitable as the flow of the Minnesota River past New Ulm. The first *Turnhalle* was destroyed during the Dakota War of 1862.

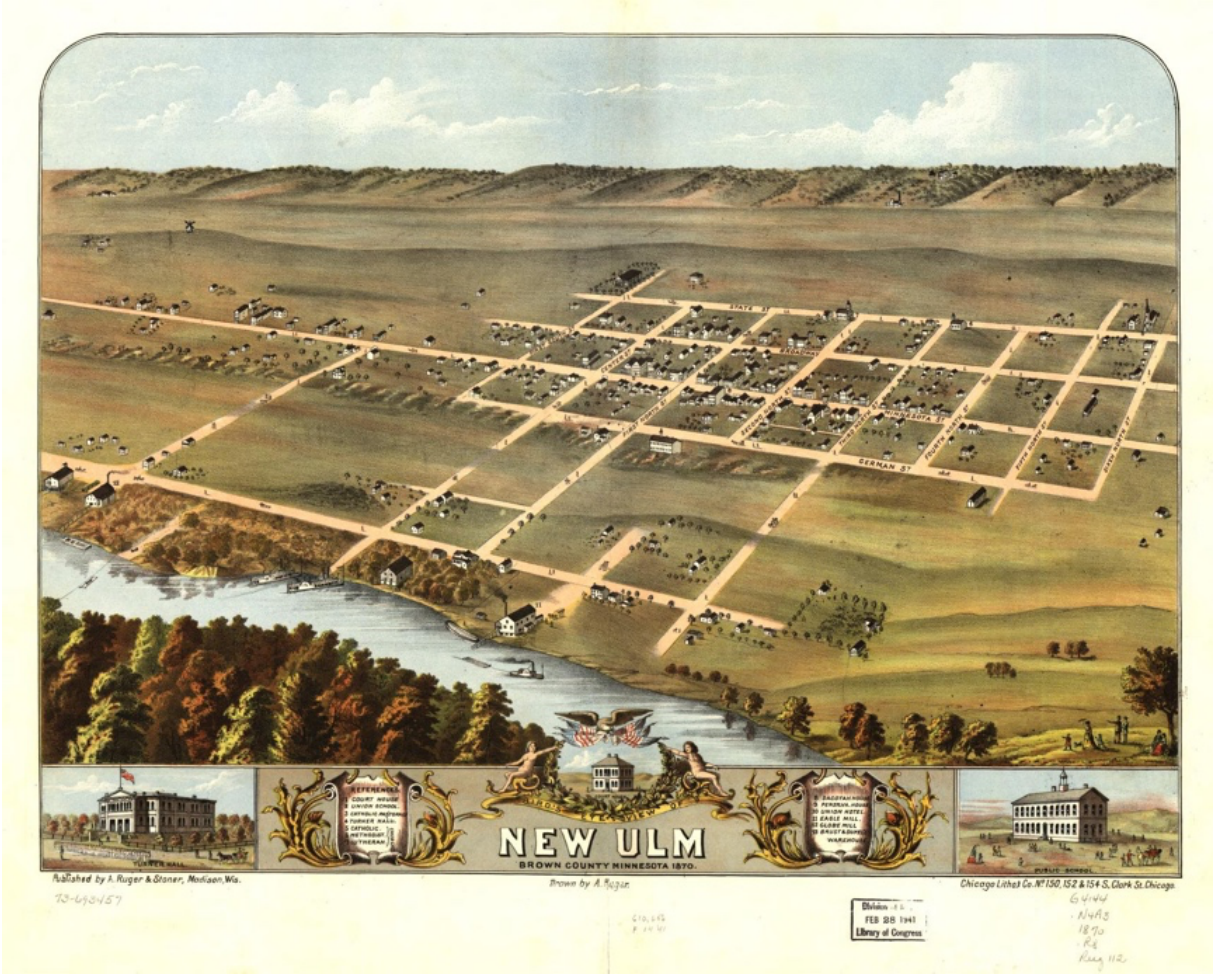


Figure 8. A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of New Ulm, Brown County, Minnesota, 1870*, 1870, lithograph, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, G4144.N4A3 1870 .R8, https://www.loc.gov/item/73693457/. An 1870 view of New Ulm. The windmill at left, on the city's south side, is associated with the first site proposed for the New Ulm college. The college would ultimately locate on the bluffs above the city.



Figure 9. [Minnesota Street in 1871], photograph, 1871, New Ulm—Minnesota St. File (12-7), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. Minnesota Street in 1871, much as it would have appeared during the Dakota War of 1862, nine years earlier. Around 2,000 refugees sheltered in a barricaded, three-block area of downtown during the Second Battle of New Ulm on August 23, 1862.



Figure 10. [Turner Men Posing with Gymnastics Equipment], photograph, n.d., Turner Hall—Society Athletics File (19-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. The *Turner* (lit., "gymnast") movement promoted both physical and intellectual development. This undated photograph shows a group of *Turner* men posing with gymnastics equipment in the New Ulm *Turnhalle*.



Figure 11. [Turner Women Exercising in Formation], photograph, n.d., Turner Hall—Society Athletics File (19-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. Women of the New Ulm *Turnverein* exercising in formation. The *Turner* motto, *mens sana in corpore sano* ("sound mind in a sound body"), is an ancient axiom formulated by the Roman author Juvenal.



Figure 12. New Ulm Turn. Zoeglings-Verein, photograph, 1884, Turner Hall—Society Athletics File (19-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. This photograph, taken the same year as the founding of the college (1884), shows a group of New Ulm *Turner* youths during a training session.



Figure 13. [Turner Men Seated in the Rathskeller], photograph, 1911, Turner Hall—Society Buildings File (19-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. A group of *Turner* men, photographed here in 1911, gathered in the *Rathskeller* of the New Ulm *Turnhalle*. The *Turnhalle*, at the geographic center of New Ulm, served also as the city's social, cultural, educational, and philosophical center.



Figure 14. Minnesota Street in New Ulm in the Latter Seventies, photograph, ca. 1875–1880, New Ulm—Minnesota St. File (12-7), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. A view down Minnesota Street, looking south, during the late 1870s.



Figure 15. MN Str. Looking North, photograph, ca. 1880s, New Ulm—Minnesota St. File (12-7), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. A view up Minnesota Street, looking north from Center Street, during the 1880s.



Figure 16. [The 1901 Turnhalle], photograph, n.d., Turner Hall—Society Buildings File (19-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. The expanded 1901 *Turnhalle*. At its dedication, William Pfaender defended the New Ulm *Turner* against accusations of religious intolerance.



Figure 17. Early School Group—New Ulm on steps of Turner Hall, photograph, n.d., New Ulm—Early School Photographs File (24-1), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. A group of unidentified schoolchildren on the steps of the New Ulm *Turnhalle*. The *Turnverein* organized the first public schools in New Ulm and operated a Sunday school that taught agnosticism, humanism, and freethought.



Figure 18. St. Paul's Evangelical Church dedicated June 17, 1866, photograph, n.d., St. Paul's Lutheran File II (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. The first church building of St. Paul's congregation, dedicated 1866. It was located diagonally across from the present-day St. Paul's church, dedicated 1882.



Figure 19. [Postcard Written with Insects by a Survivor of the Locust Plague], ca. 1873–1877, postcard, Nicollet County Historical Society, St. Peter, MN, E3104. A locust plague ravaged southern Minnesota from 1873–77. This postcard from St. Peter, written with the bodies of locusts, illustrates the desperate circumstances of those who suffered.



Figure 20. The Lutheran Church Following the Cyclone in 1881, photograph, 1881, St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. St. Paul's church in the aftermath of the 1881 tornado. The disaster destroyed much of New Ulm.



Figure 21. Construction under way of Lutheran church on State St. New to replace the one destroyed in the cyclone, photograph, 1882, St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. After the 1881 tornado, Lutherans of the Synodical Conference sent aid to replace St. Paul's destroyed church building. This photograph shows the new church, the present-day sanctuary, under construction.



Figure 22. St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Dedicated in 1882, photograph, n.d., St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. St. Paul's second church as it appeared following its 1882 dedication.



Figure 23. The Gravestone of Christian F. Boock, photograph by author, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Cemetery, New Ulm, MN, January 15, 2026. The gravestone of Friedrich Boock (Christian F. Boock), standing in St. Paul's cemetery in New Ulm. Its epitaph honors the wagonbuilder as a man who "felt obligated to make sure God's Word rules here."



Figure 24. Rev. C.J. Albrecht, photograph, n.d., "Albrecht, C.J.," Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. C.J. Albrecht (1847–1924) was a German immigrant Lutheran pastor who served St. Paul's, New Ulm, from 1882 to 1924. While serving as president of the Minnesota Synod (1883–94), he helped lead the New Ulm college effort (1883–84), served as the first director of Dr. Martin Luther College (1884–85), and was instrumental in organizing the synodical federation (1892) that later became the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



Figure 25. Rev. Albrecht and one of his Confirmation classes, photograph, 1898, St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. C.J. Albrecht with a confirmation class of St. Paul's, New Ulm, in 1898 on the steps of their church.



Figure 26. Rev. Albrecht and the Officers and Trustees of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1903, photograph, 1903, St. Paul's Lutheran File I (22-2), Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. C.J. Albrecht (front, center) with the lay leadership of St. Paul's, New Ulm, in 1903. Twenty years earlier, Albrecht and the lay leaders' predecessors championed the New Ulm college.

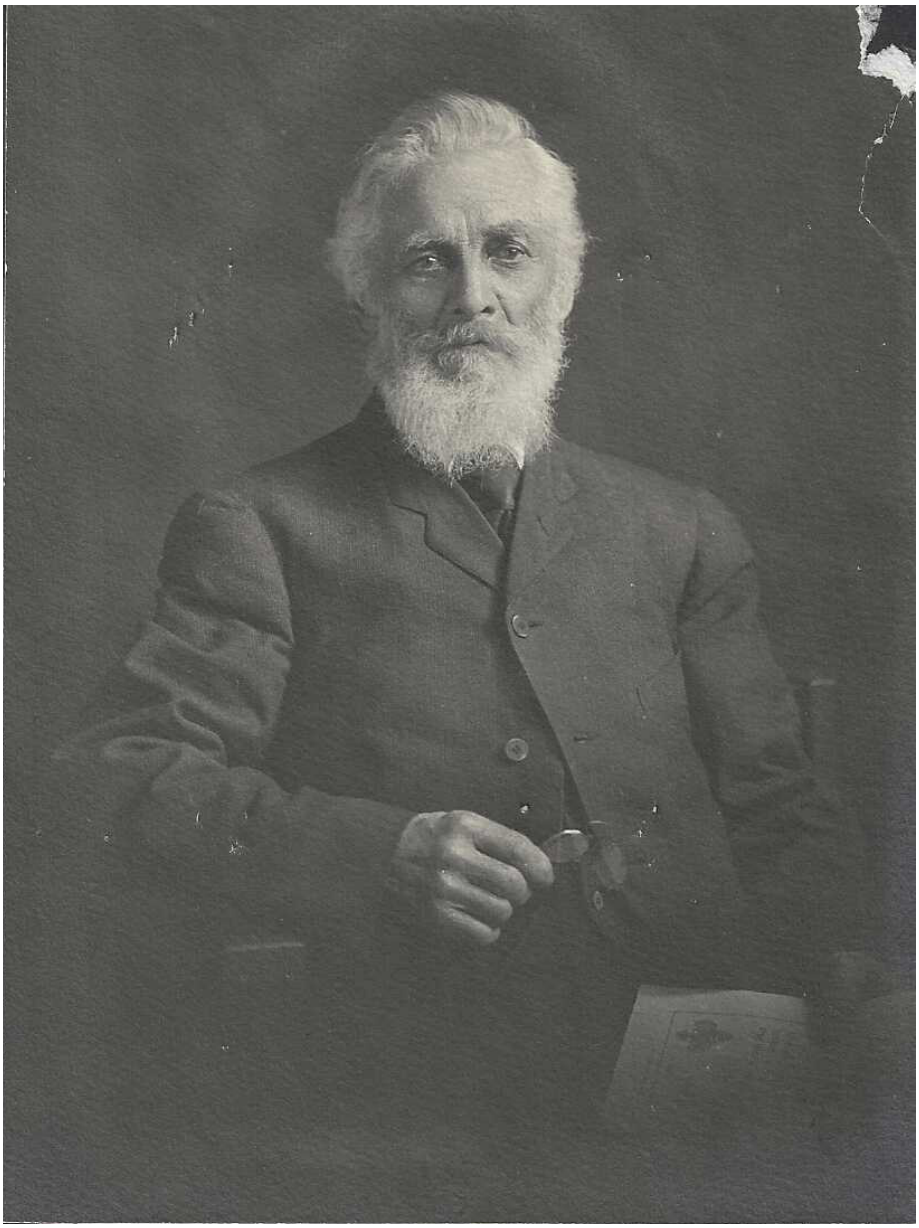


Figure 27. Ernst G. Koch. The Cottonwood Company, photograph, n.d., “Koch, E.G.,” Family Files, Brown County Historical Society, New Ulm, MN. Ernst G. Koch (1833–1919) was a German immigrant fur trader, land agent, and member of St. Paul’s, New Ulm, who donated land to the college effort. He fought as part of the Cottonwood Company during the Dakota War of 1862 and assisted several rescue expeditions. An active Lutheran lay leader, Koch served as treasurer of both the college building committee and the Minnesota Synod.



Figure 28. [Early Photo of Dr. Martin Luther College], photograph, 1885, Martin Luther College Archives, New Ulm, MN. Students on the steps of Dr. Martin Luther College in 1885. The college was dedicated on November 9, 1884.



Figure 29. [Aerial View of Martin Luther College], photograph, ca. 2010, Martin Luther College Archives, New Ulm, MN. An aerial view of Martin Luther College as it appeared following the construction of the Chapel of the Christ, dedicated April 2010. The college prepares men and women for the ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



Figure 30. [Martin Luther College on the Minnesota Valley], photograph, May 15, 2019, Martin Luther College Archives, New Ulm, MN. *Excelsior*.