Chapter Five

Growth in Service
The Poehler Presidency
1946–1970

During the same time in which the nation had succeeded in World War II and was poised to restore and expand a peace-time economy, so Concordia College had survived the challenges that threatened its existence and was on the threshold of the greatest growth period in its first century. When the Board of Control met in May 1946 to elect Concordia’s third president, there was an urgent need for administrative leadership in the completion of the campus buildings then in the planning stages as well as in meeting the educational opportunities already being required by the mushrooming population of college students. The Board selected the Reverend Willy August Poehler, the 41-year-old pastor of Trinity First Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, the oldest Missouri Synod congregation in Minnesota.

Pastor Poehler, a native Minnesotan and a 1924 alumnus of Concordia, had continued his close association with the college during his pastorates at three congregations in the state and envisioned the opportunities for increased service to the church that his call provided. The President-elect invited a representative of the board to join him in meeting with his congregation. Trinity First Lutheran gave its pastor a peaceful release so that he could accept the presidency by the beginning of August. His first meeting with the faculty was on August 12, 1946. At that time he projected one of his major goals of making Concordia a four-year college, perhaps in conjunction with the University of Minnesota. In the years ahead, the faculty would have numerous opportunities to respond to frequent innovative ideas for growth.
Years later, President Poehler recalled that he was a bit apprehensive when he thought of becoming president of a college whose faculty included six of his former professors. But then with a wry grin he added that if any discussion didn't produce agreement, he would remind them of his position as president. As an administrator, however, he was very conscious of keeping “harmony” in Concordia.

On September 15, 1946, President-elect Poehler returned to Trinity First where he was formally installed as Concordia’s third president. This unique circumstance of a president’s installation occurring before school actually began was the result of a major outbreak of poliomyelitis that summer in the Twin Cities which caused the State Board of Health to request a delay in the beginning of the academic year. Consequently, Concordia began classes on September 17, 1946, with President Poehler already in office.

Original planning anticipated that Concordia’s first academic inauguration of a president would be held as part of the June 1947 commencement activities. The Board of Control appointed a special sub-committee to consider such an event. Following their December meeting, “the committee could not recommend an academic inauguration,” nor did the discussion support an inaugural banquet. The perceived secular practice of an academic inauguration was tabled for reconsideration—a quarter of a century later.

A new set of duties and prerogatives of college presidents was formulated by the Board for Higher Education to improve administrative effectiveness. These recommended policies were adopted by Synod in 1944. From their beginnings, Missouri Synod schools limited the powers of the president by an extremely democratic organization of the faculty which collectively made decisions on virtually all areas of campus life. In 1946 President Poehler initiated some of these innovative policies to improve the administrative efficiency at Concordia.

Some of the more significant operational changes for which President Poehler was partially responsible during the 1946–47 year have become widely accepted procedures on college campuses nation-wide since that time. The office of registrar was established, and Professor Fred Wahlers was the first registrar responsible for student records. Since he also collected the fees from students, in 1948 the title “Bursar” was added to his title of Registrar. Secondly,
a dean of students was appointed for both the college and high school divisions. The deans were combination chaplains and supervisors of student life. Two pastors, Henry W. C. Luedke and Eugene S. Schmidt, were the initial Deans of Students of Concordia, the former for the college and the latter for the high school.

A third change was the dissolution of the faculty discipline committee. Thereafter, the president handled all cases of student discipline, including student suspensions or permanent discontinuations. The faculty greatly appreciated the elimination of special meetings and numerous hours needed to consider alleged problems of student behavior.

The faculty admissions committee changed its emphasis from considering all applicants to only the special cases of those who did not meet the criteria for enrollment. Admissions decisions were primarily to be made by the registrar. The role and function of the admissions committee has remained unchanged now for over 40 years.

Another innovation of the 1946-47 year was the introduction of a printed daily bulletin to improve communication between college administrators and the student body. Instead of oral announcements after the morning chapel service, each student was given a copy of the daily bulletin as he left chapel. The bulletin evolved to become the official daily publication to announce information from all areas of the campus to the student body. The bulletin is published by the office of the Dean of Students and is posted and distributed throughout the campus. As the longest continuous publication on campus, the Daily Bulletin will celebrate its 46th anniversary during the centennial year.

While those five changes may have aided the future growth of Concordia, other events may have been equally important during the first year of the Poehler presidency. In order to rejuvenate the stalled Buenger library project, the Board requested the 1947 synodical convention in Chicago to approve $135,000 to complete the library. A grant of only $100,000 was approved, pending the result of the Conquest for Christ collection planned for 1949. Although no immediate construction funds were available, the library was a step closer to reality.

New enthusiasm was also generated for the planned Lutheran Memorial Center. The student body became especially active in
fund-raising by presenting benefit concerts and variety programs, seeking contributions from individuals in their home congregations, and making their own personal pledges. The solicitation of funds culminated with the students’ assistance in a mass mailing to encourage a special memorial collection in congregations on Mother’s Day, 1947. By the end of the year, the L.M.C. fund had surpassed $200,000. Progress was being made, but construction was still years away.

The Synod’s approval on March 18, 1947, of a senior college for pre-seminary students to complete their baccalaureate degrees was met with great ambivalence on the Concordia campus. While the majority of the faculty were pleased that a specialized senior college would potentially enrich the academic preparation of students entering their professional seminary education, the faculty felt that this development was contrary to the direction American higher education was taking. President Poehler suggested that the synodical junior colleges in the most advantageous geographical and educational environment should be expanded into full four-year colleges with at least one major designed for pre-seminary liberal arts students.

Part of President Poehler’s expansion plan was to enroll both high school and college women at Concordia, without any additional cost to synod, as an early prerequisite for expanding the college. On February 5, 1947, the Board of Control approved a resolution to submit to the 1947 synodical convention in Chicago urging the introduction of coeducation. The request was denied just as similar resolutions had been declined at the previous four conventions.

The history of pre-ministerial education in the Missouri Synod has validated many of the recommendations offered by President Poehler, the faculty, and the Board. As late as the 1953 Houston convention, Concordia’s advisory delegates were offering alternatives to the pre-ministerial senior college. The post-war need of congregations for more synodically educated teachers was the eventual avenue that led to Concordia’s expansion in 1962.

The goal of the first half of President Poehler’s incumbency was to improve and expand Concordia’s academic program and enlarge the physical facilities so that the college would be equipped to increase its service to church and community when the opportunity arose. The first step was to focus on academic improvement.
In 1944, the synodical convention in Saginaw, Michigan, urged all educational institutions to seek accreditation from their regional agencies. This meant that although Concordia High School and College had been accredited by the highest agency in the state, the University of Minnesota, they must now seek the approval of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The secretary of the North Central Association visited campus on August 9, 1944, and the faculty adopted his suggestion to secure accreditation for the high school first, and then attempt the same for the college department.

Preliminary work toward accreditation was under way when President Poehler arrived on campus. He led the completion of the faculty self-study so that North Central application could be made by 1948, with actual campus visitation by the eight-member team on March 14, 1949. The committee approved the application and Concordia High School was received into full membership at the annual spring meeting. The official announcement of accreditation by the North Central Association was made by President Poehler at the June 10, 1949, commencement. Since Professor Arthur M. Ahlschwede had just became the principal of the high school, this was the first time that the president was not the primary administrator for the secondary program. This also was the first graduation at which the faculty was robed in academic attire.

The second step in improving the physical facilities on campus was accomplished in two phases. With the successful completion of the synodical Conquest for Christ collection in 1949, the Buenger Library phase was revived. The Board's new request for $161,000 to complete the library was appropriated and the funds were made available immediately. Construction began with ground breaking on August 18, 1950, and by November 5, 1950, the cornerstone was in place. When the dedication service for the Buenger Memorial Library was held on November 11, 1951, increased construction expenses had pushed the final cost to $219,000. As a result, several areas were unfinished and some furnishings were incomplete. The deficit was eventually eliminated by another collection from congregations in the Minnesota District and by many individual donations. By Christmas 1951, the head librarian, Professor E. G. Richard Siebert had all holdings shelved with greatly improved service available to the college community.
Phase two of improving the facilities was the completion of the Lutheran Memorial Center. While the new library was under construction, the synodical Board of Directors authorized the site plan for the LMC. Some district committee leaders urged a second fund drive on Mother’s Day in 1951 so the building could be erected within the calendar year, assuming the request for construction steel was approved by the government. By September 1951, federal authorities had allocated the necessary steel for the building, the fund had grown to within $7,000 of the goal, and the building committee felt safe in awarding the final contracts. By September 10, 1952, excavating began for the long-awaited building. The cornerstone laying was held on April 26, 1953, and the final service of dedication occurred on October 18, 1953.

At its completion, the Lutheran Memorial Center was an impressive and functional addition to the campus even though escalating building costs required the elimination of some intended features of the original plan. Most noticeably absent were the swimming pool, bowling alleys, and completed offices. The need for a facility with greatly increased seating capacity was met by the LMC. Used as an auditorium, 2,500 people could be accommodated for events using the elevated stage. With folding bleachers on each side of the basketball court, 1,200 spectators could be seated for athletic contests. Much of the unfinished basement was completed in 1959 for usage as a student recreation area which was used as a student union until a similar area was provided in 1963 in Wollaeger Hall.

The total original cost of the Lutheran Memorial Center was $361,806.45. This entire sum was contributed by congregations and individuals of the geographical region served by Concordia without any synodical assistance in the same way that the gymnasium dedicated in 1912 was funded. The financial contributors to the LMC wished this building to be their personal memorial, dedicated to the men and women who served God and country in military service, primarily in the second World War.

Concurrent with the efforts to complete the Buenger Library and the Lutheran Memorial Center was an intensification of plans to expand the curriculum and introduce coeducation. In February 1949, President Poehler suggested, as one of several options, that Concordia add a third year of college work on an experimental basis. This program could eventually be enlarged to four years. To
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obtain needed space, the first two high school years would be discontinued. He proposed opening the school to coeducation, but only for commuting students until campus residence halls could be established. But even though these ideas were not accepted immediately by Synod, the concept of expansion with coeducation was persistently presented to the church as one means of increasing Concordia's service to the Missouri Synod. With his strong personal conviction of the future role Concordia could fulfill, President Poehler was never at a loss to offer numerous alternatives to achieve these goals.

Keenly aware of the Board for Higher Education's study in the 1940's which concluded that the demand for women teachers in the parish schools was much greater than the supply, the faculty anticipated the approval of coeducation by the 1950 synodical convention in Milwaukee and had prepared a two-year pre-education curriculum for men and women at Concordia. To strengthen its position, the faculty had already secured accreditation from the University of Minnesota for the curricular expansion.

Only ten days after the Milwaukee convention closed, President Poehler called a historic special faculty meeting on July 10, 1950, to present the stipulations of the Board for Higher Education under which coeducation could begin with the fall term. Three important conditions applied to the first class of twenty-four coeds: priority was given to area applicants who were on the waiting list at Concordia in River Forest, student fees were the same as River Forest, and only first-year college students were admitted. Eleven members of the first class were from Minnesota while the remaining 13 women represented six other states. Although some opponents of coeducation had predicted dire results, the decline in scholastic achievement never occurred, and Concordia rapidly entered a new era of growth with diversity. In fact, the student body would have joined in a chorus of the song President Buenger composed in 1938 advocating coeducation at Concordia, but it was reported that the students could not locate a copy of the work.

In 1949 the Board of Control suggested to the faculty that it consider reinstating the baccalaureate service in addition to the commencement program. The traditional baccalaureate had been discontinued in 1938. The faculty adopted the suggestion, and the era of the modern baccalaureate began with the service at Pilgrim

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Lutheran Church in St. Paul on June 8, 1950. The graduates wore caps and gowns, but the faculty members were seated among the congregation.

In 1951 the faculty approved the granting of Associate in Arts degrees to the graduates of the prescribed two-year course of study. Thus when the first coed junior college class was approaching graduation, commencement week had become similar to that of many American junior colleges. The faculty tried various combinations of days and times for the baccalaureate and commencement—consecutive evenings, morning-afternoon, and afternoon-evening of the same day. However, the preferred format was the baccalaureate service on Friday evening and the commencement exercises on Saturday morning. This schedule has now been followed long enough to qualify as a modern tradition.

By 1953 when Concordia celebrated its 60th anniversary, enrollment reached a record 377, and President Poehler intensified efforts to achieve North Central Association accreditation for the junior college department. Two years previously, a consultant from an accredited Minnesota junior college had met with the faculty to discuss the preparation of a self-survey of the college and the application process for accreditation. Professor Oswald Overn was selected to direct the self-survey report and edit the work of faculty committees who analyzed and evaluated nine dimensions of the operational functions and services of Concordia College. The completed study was submitted to the North Central Association in June 1954, with the request for a campus accreditation visit during the following academic year.

Since President Poehler had just received the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Higher Education from the University of Minnesota in 1954, he was knowledgeable of and sensitive to accreditation criteria and expectations of accrediting agencies. The self-study of the faculty raised unofficial concerns for immediate successful accreditation. Concordia had a competent and dedicated faculty serving the church in the best tradition of the Missouri Synod. But the decade following World War II was bringing significant change in American higher education.

Change permeated the 1950's, but were changes necessary to make a good college better or to provide a better education for future students? Although Concordia risked the denial of its ac-
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creditation application, President Poehler solicited approval for a North Central campus visitation, especially from more recent faculty additions, to validate his perception of changes needed and areas to be strengthened for long range growth and expansion. The request for a North Central evaluation was accepted, and the campus visit was completed in January 1956.

The North Central Association denied Concordia's application for membership in April 1956, but the written report of the accreditation visit provided the blueprint for major campus change. In the next two years major improvements were made in administrative organization, academic management and course evaluation, student counseling, library expansion, and progress toward more realistic faculty teaching loads. Since the only full-time faculty member with a terminal degree was the president, a major priority before the next accreditation attempt was to increase the number of graduate degrees held by the faculty.

Efforts to meet the criteria for North Central accreditation were intensified. A second self-survey study and campus visit in November 1958 produced a favorable recommendation by the evaluation team. Finally on April 21, 1959, Concordia College was received into full membership in the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. With the success of this accreditation process, Concordia was on the threshold of an almost continuous cycle of self-study, campus visitation, accreditation procedures which would be repeated almost a dozen times as academic programs and curricular expansion dominated the next 15 years.

The academic growth that began with the introduction of co-education in 1950 demanded a simultaneous development of the physical facilities of the campus to accommodate an increasing student body. Initial classroom space was obtained by remodeling the administration-classroom building in 1954. The northern fourth of the building contained the two-story aula, a chapel-auditorium, which was converted into five modern classrooms and a faculty office complex. The three largest of these classrooms were made for classes as large as 60 students enrolled primarily in core courses required in all academic programs.

To replace the chapel, the 1953 synodical convention in Houston, Texas, had appropriated funds for a concurrent remodeling of the gymnasium into a new chapel seating 600. While these dual efforts...
$170,000 remodeling projects were in progress, the regular morning chapel services were conducted in the Lutheran Memorial Center.

Forty-three years after the first new building on campus had been dedicated, it was about to begin a new function. The conversion of the gymnasium into the Graebner Memorial Chapel was completed for its dedication on November 13, 1955. The three o'clock service was preceded by the unveiling of the bronze dedicatory plaque in the narthex by John Graebner, grandson of President Graebner, and a student at Concordia. The plaque was produced by the Flour City Ornamental Iron Company of Minneapolis and donated by the family and friends of the second president. The main speaker for the dedication was the Reverend Martin Graebner, Jr., son of the former president.

Adjacent to the new entrance to the Graebner Memorial Chapel, a unique steel bell tower was constructed. Beneath the cross at the apex of the tower, the old college bell was mounted with a new electrically operated clapper. This bell is the only known remnant of an original campus building. It was donated by Washington Heights Lutheran Church in Chicago, and in 1894, it was mounted atop the old main annex—Bell Dormitory. Years later the bell was separated from its support and dropped to the ground apparently by prankish students. Professor O. B. Overn retrieved the bell and gave it a new home in the college museum for over a dozen years. The chapel bell might be justifiably designated as Concordia's Centennial Symbol. Most appropriately, it is still calling the campus community to worship.

The festivities of November 13, 1955, continued in the Lutheran Memorial Center with an evening dedicatory concert on a new Grotrian-Steinway concert grand piano, the first of its kind in Minnesota. The pianist was Professor Bernhard Weiser of the music faculty of the University of Minnesota. Although the piano was admired for its brilliant tonal quality, it had minimum usage. An inadequate protective storage area coupled with the extreme atmospheric conditions of the L.M.C. had a deteriorating effect on the instrument. It was sold before its magnificence had a chance to fill the present Music Auditorium completed in 1972.

Following the piano recital, special recognition was given to two dedicated servants of Concordia who had each completed 25 years of service to Concordia, with special emphases on its students. Pres-
ident Poehler presented gifts to the jubilarians in symbolic appreciation of their contributions to the campus community. The first was Mrs. Lydia Dierks-Caldwell, Concordia’s first secretary and administrative office manager for President Graebner and later for the registrar, whose part in Concordia’s history was presented in the previous chapter.

The second silver anniversary celebrated that evening was that of Miss Anna Gutz. In 1930 she became Concordia’s first registered nurse, who was primarily responsible for establishing the Health Center on the second floor of the newly completed dining hall. She became the resident medical staff of one, who cared for the health needs of students. During epidemics of measles or mumps, when students were confined to the health center, she prepared and served meals, cleaned the rooms, and helped the students around the clock in numerous ways, in addition to supervising their medical treatment as outlined by the school physician.

She was very skillful in discerning illnesses requiring medical treatment and those precipitated by unfinished class assignments. The latter ills were carefully diagnosed, and the individuals were given aspirin and sent back to class, the students reported. Ironically, those with more serious problems were also given aspirin. This is one of the student legends explaining how Miss Anna Gutz, R.N. became known as “Aspirin Annie.” However, during her 33-year career, which began before the advent of antibiotics, she provided students with the best medical care possible. While she may have had great faith in aspirin, one of the most powerful drugs ever discovered and most readily available, she never missed a diagnosis of appendicitis, a local physician said at her retirement in 1963. During the ensuing years she reportedly said her longevity must indicate she took her own good advice. Concordia’s legendary nurse of the century died eight months after she celebrated her 100th birthday in 1984.

The expanding student body of the 1950’s exerted great pressure on the limited student housing. The majority of the college students lived in the original campus buildings with the unimaginative names of Main, South, and West dormitories. In 1954 the Board requested the Minnesota District to initiate a centennial collection for a new dormitory which would mark the 1956 centennial of the Missouri Synod in Minnesota. The District supported a capital fund offering
which successfully met the total cost of $196,625 for the new Centennial Hall. Dedication for the new residence for women was held on December 1, 1957, and it was immediately occupied by 60 women, even though it was designed for only 40. The Minnesota District was justifiably pleased that its members had commemorated a century of the Missouri Synod's work in Minnesota by fully financing Centennial Hall.

Even while Centennial was under construction, plans were being finalized for another residence hall to be built immediately to the east. On April 10, 1958, ground-breaking was held for Minnesota Hall. Since 1958 was the centennial of Minnesota statehood, it seemed most appropriate to name the new structure Minnesota Hall. The residence was designed for 50 students, but at times it served as the home of 73 women students. The service of dedication was held on October 19, 1958. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod supplied the funds for the total cost of Minnesota which reached $205,000. As adjacent similarly designed buildings, the significance of the names Centennial and Minnesota continues to produce a degree of confusion among some members of each entering class as illustrated by the student who said that both buildings just represented events that only happen every hundred years.

With the 1992 Synodical Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Missouri Synod has held 58 general conventions. The only one ever held in Minnesota was in 1956 when the Minnesota District was celebrating the centennial of the Missouri Synod in the state. The 1956 St. Paul convention provided the opportunity for delegates to visit Concordia College and recognize the potential for growth if more adequate facilities could be provided. Thereafter, the convention approved the construction of two residence units which could become one building when joined by a common entrance lounge area. However, since both Centennial and Minnesota Halls were still in the planning stage when the convention ended, it would be over two years before construction could begin on the residence approved in 1956.

By early 1959, the area along Griggs Avenue had been selected as the site for the new residence hall, two faculty homes had been relocated, and the name Walther Hall had been suggested for the new building. Walther Hall was chosen in anticipation of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Dr. Carl Ferdinand
Wilhelm Walther, elected as the first president of the Missouri Synod in 1847.

On March 5, 1959, ground was broken for the long anticipated men’s residence hall. At its completion, the total cost of the furnished building, including site preparation, had reached $402,500. At dedication on November 1, 1959, the name Walther Hall was officially given to the edifice. Each wing was planned for 50 men with its own residence counselor. Two years later, to commemorate the sesquicentennial of Walther’s birth on October 25, 1811, a bronze medallion with a likeness of Dr. Walther in relief was mounted on the entrance wall of the lounge which served both wings of Walther Hall.

Soon after he became president, Dr. Poehler, with the full support of the Board, began the promotion of four-year liberal arts colleges with a core curriculum common to both elementary education and pre-seminary programs. Consequently, they discouraged the establishment of a senior college only for ministerial students as being contrary to the trend in American higher education. However, in 1957 the Missouri Synod established a senior college at Fort Wayne, Indiana, so that the pre-seminary students from the synodical junior colleges could complete their baccalaureate degrees and qualify for entrance to the Concordia Seminary in either St. Louis or Springfield, Illinois. Thereafter, Concordia concentrated on expanding its offerings to a four-year teachers college. The completion of the campus construction projects of the 1950’s was essential to Concordia’s growth in service to the church.

The 1959 San Francisco synodical convention adopted a long-range plan to improve the quality of teaching in the elementary schools of Synod. By 1966, initial placement in a parish school would require graduation from a four-year teachers’ college. This resolution renewed the hope of Concordia to establish the third synodical teachers college in St. Paul.

In the mid-1950’s, many junior college graduates completed additional summer course work so they could begin teaching in September and ease the shortage of teachers. In 1957 Concordia began offering some of these courses needed by beginning teachers as extension courses through Concordia in Seward, Nebraska. The experience gained from these summer sessions encouraged Concordia to enlist high school graduates of 1960 to begin their college
work immediately in June. With the next two years and two more summers of study, they would finish their junior year in August, 1962. Twenty-seven women enrolled in this accelerated program.

In 1960 the Board enlisted the services of Dr. M. G. Neale, emeritus professor of education from the University of Minnesota to undertake a space utilization and feasibility study to determine the physical needs of the campus for the next 10 years in anticipation of an expansion to a four-year college. The conclusion reached was that Concordia was in a favorable posture to accommodate up to 1,200 students in additional programs with the addition of new buildings under consideration. The most urgent needs were academic facilities for the natural sciences and music.

In addition to assisting the campus study of Dr. Neale, Professor Delphin Schulz chaired a faculty committee engaged in a curriculum study to evaluate current offerings and design a four-year program of teacher education. The result was an integrated core of courses for all students during the first two years of college which would also serve as a complementary foundation for juniors and seniors in elementary education. The faculty favored a bachelor of arts degree program rather than the predominant trend of a bachelor of science degree in over 90 percent of institutions with a teacher education department at that time.

One major consideration in developing the four-year curriculum was academic economy. It was assumed that the lower the cost to expand the program, the greater would be its acceptance by the Board for Higher Education and the next synodical convention in 1962. Thus one of President Poehler’s watchwords during the curricular planning was “parsimony.” The cost of expansion was kept relatively low by having as many courses as possible be required in the various junior college programs and having almost no electivity within the senior college years. In practice this meant the student had three choices: to attend Concordia, to select an education major for senior college study, and to choose an area of concentration. The final bachelor of arts program was carefully planned in consultation with accrediting agencies and received their support.

After years of hoping and planning, Concordia was ready to present its request to expand into a four-year college at the 1962 synodical convention in Cleveland, Ohio. With the encouragement
of supporting resolutions from six synodical districts, Concordia made its case for growth in service. In one of the last evening sessions of the convention, the resolution was submitted to the delegates and approved by a quick voice vote with virtually no discussion, much to the joy of the ten faculty delegates from Concordia who were almost stunned by the speedy approval. However, enrollment in the senior college division was limited to women. Nevertheless, Concordia’s delegation returned to St. Paul smiling because they were confident the camel had his nose in the tent flap.

The meticulous planning for expansion permitted synod’s newest senior college to begin classes on September 9, 1962, with a junior class of 46 women. At the end of the year, some of the women chose to teach a year before beginning their senior year, while some of those accelerated students who had been teaching a year after finishing their junior year in 1962 returned to campus. They joined those continuing from the previous year to constitute the first class to receive the bachelor of arts degree on May 30, 1964. The commencement speaker was President W. A. Poehler, who spoke on a favorite theme of his, “Christian liberal arts education is the best preparation for the service professions.” But in spite of the academic solemnity of the occasion, there was an inner glow of satisfaction and achievement which permeated the president’s address.

The year 1962 was also a significant year in the Missouri Synod. Dr. George Beto had resigned from the presidency of Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. Two native Minnesotans were alleged to be the leading candidates to succeed him. A Springfield alumni group strongly supported President Poehler, but a highly respected professor of classical languages, already a member of the seminary faculty, was elected president. Perhaps church historians will always speculate on what effect Dr. Poehler’s election might have had on the history of the Missouri Synod if he had become the president of Concordia Seminary-Springfield, instead of the Reverend Professor Jacob A. O. Preus, Ph.D.

The success at the Cleveland convention and the enrolling of senior college students was a pleasant beginning for the next five years when the faculty became heavily involved, at times overwhelmed, and nearly exhausted by two of their favorite phrases: self-study and accreditation visit.

As soon as the first junior class was enrolled, the faculty felt
obligated to secure accreditation for its bachelor of arts degree program. While accreditation was ordinarily not possible until several classes had graduated, the North Central Association had just initiated a new policy which would grant preliminary accreditation to an institution with demonstrated planning and resources to meet its educational objectives. Each application for accreditation required an institutional self-study document followed by a campus visitation team which attempts to evaluate an institution’s ability to meet criteria which qualify it for accreditation.

Concordia’s schedule of accreditation visits after the four-year program was in place began with the North Central Association of Colleges visit on January 24 and 25, 1963. The positive recommendation of the evaluation team provided preliminary accreditation for the B.A. program even before there were any seniors on campus.

In order for the first graduates to accept teaching positions without having the validity of their teaching credentials questioned, Concordia needed certification for its graduates with the Minnesota State Department of Education. A satisfactory self-study report permitted the campus visitation on February 26 and 27, 1964. The team’s evaluation prompted the State Board of Education to approve the teacher education program of Concordia for certification by the Minnesota State Department of Education. Interestingly, a member of that visitation team from Mankato State University was Dr. Benjamin Buck, currently a member of Concordia’s Board of Regents.

The next evaluation visit was on May 11, 1964, when a team of four liberal arts faculty from the University of Minnesota arrived to validate Concordia’s curriculum in the liberal arts. While the degree program contained professional education courses, the liberal arts emphasis was present with sufficient strength to secure accreditation by the University as a liberal arts college. This was a critical first step in becoming eligible to apply for membership in the Minnesota Private College Council of liberal arts colleges and eventually to receive monies from the Private College Fund.

By the time the third senior class graduated, the program had been adequately strengthened to apply for final North Central Association accreditation. The suggestions from the preliminary accreditation visit of 1963 were investigated by a three-member committee on January 19 and 20, 1967. On the basis of the ensuing report, Concordia College was granted full accreditation for its bach-
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elor of arts program on April 6, 1967. From April 7–14 the campus celebrated “Accreditation Week” with renewed faith and joy in the knowledge that Concordia’s program of quality education had been validated by the highest regional accrediting agency.

In the midst of the accreditation process, the largest residence hall on campus was under construction. To make room for the new building, it was necessary to raze Old Main and the adjoining stone home in which the Buenger family once resided. The buildings had various functions through the years, but following a complete $55,000 remodeling in 1953, Old Main became a residence hall for 88 women, and the first president’s home became a duplex for faculty families. A few years later Old Main again became a men’s residence when Centennial and Minnesota Halls became available for women. When the wrecking ball attacked these limestone and brick edifices, they were presumed to be the oldest buildings in St. Paul, especially the room that was President Buenger’s study. This room was part of the sentry tower erected about 1805 for protection from potentially unfriendly Indians. Even though the Ramsey County Historical Society was interested in preserving the first president’s home, sufficient funds to save the building never materialized.

While the demolition of Old Main was still in progress, the groundbreaking for Wollaeger Hall took place during the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League convention, meeting on campus August 15 and 16, 1962. A little over a year later during the Minnesota South District Convention, the cornerstone laying was held on August 21, 1963.

As construction was under way on the new residence hall, earth-moving equipment was working to the north, slowly excavating the former athletic field which would become the roadway for Interstate 94. In 1961 the state had condemned the football field for highway construction and paid the college $320,000. The northern boundary of the campus was now a major interstate highway, and the parallel service road south of the freeway was renamed Concordia Avenue. The increased traffic noise from the north on the freeway was somewhat balanced by rerouting the state highway traffic on Marshall Avenue adjacent to the campus on the south.

In the midst of all this highway construction, Wollaeger Hall moved steadily toward completion. On February 9, 1964, the building was dedicated and officially named Wollaeger Hall in memory
of the Reverend Herman William Franz Wollaeger, Ph.D., professor of German and librarian at Concordia from 1904 to 1941.

In anticipation of a major increase in the student body in the future, the foundation and basement were designed so that six additional stories could be added to the original three floors raising the number of residents from 100 to 400 students. However, a recent evaluation of the building suggests that additional construction is not feasible with current building codes.

At dedication, the second and third floors were furnished to house men. The basement and first floor served as a student union and space for student government offices. As campus housing needs changed, Wollaeger Hall was converted to a residence for women, and the first floor, used briefly for the Health Center, is the present home of the Hand-In-Hand Child Care Center. The total cost of the building was $520,000 with $450,000 coming from the Missouri Synod and the remainder from friends of Concordia.

Almost forgotten from the 1962 synodical convention in Cleveland because of the approval of the four-year program was the passage of a first priority status of funds for a new science building. Although money had been appropriated for the building in 1959, the lack of funds in the next triennium prohibited the Board of Directors of Synod from fulfilling the resolution. By 1964 the Board was able to release $450,000 for the new science building.

The Concordia Board of Control immediately activated their plans so ground breaking could be held on August 18, 1964. The actual construction was completed in less than a year, in time for the beginning of fall classes in September 1965. The dedication service was held on September 26, 1965. The final cost was $550,000, with the additional $100,000 provided by individual donors and friends of Concordia.

In selecting a name for the new science building, the Board chose to honor the first professor of science at Concordia, the Reverend Edward Louis Arndt. He left the congregation he established in East Saginaw, Michigan, and accepted the call to Concordia in 1897. He taught all the science courses offered at that time. In 1911 he left Concordia to become a missionary in China and is credited with being the founder of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod mission in China. Without synodical support, he organized a mission society with assistance from Minnesota congregations. When his
missionary work became successful, the Synod later supported the society. He completed his ministry in Hankow, China, and was buried there in 1929.

A portion of the second floor of the Arndt Hall became the home of Concordia’s Overn Museum. Since President Buenger taught the first science class, he and the many science teachers since have continued to acquire and store illustrative teaching materials, primarily in the natural sciences. After Professor O. B. Overn became the curator of the museum in 1920, the variety of exhibits expanded to include art objects, memorabilia from alumni missionaries around the world, archeological remnants, mounted fowl, and items that almost defy classification. With over 60 years of dedicated service to Concordia’s museum, Professor Overn was the untiring champion of the century for the educational benefits of a college museum.

While the Arndt Science Hall was under construction, President Poehler and the Board of Control were carefully planning for the 1965 synodical convention in Detroit. The accomplishments with accreditation and the new buildings on campus were a positive preamble to the resolution to enroll men in the four-year teacher education program. Similar overtures were submitted by four synodical districts.

The need for synodically educated teachers to serve in the parish school of congregations was still great. But the demand for male graduates on the one hand and the hesitancy of others to permit Concordia to enroll men in the senior division produced considerable debate during the proceedings of the Detroit convention. By the close of the last session on June 26, 1965, Concordia had become a four-year coeducational liberal arts college with an elementary education major.

The campus was quick to react, and by the beginning of the second summer session male juniors were welcomed to Concordia. The proverbial camel was almost halfway into the tent. Thoughts were already surfacing about other majors, especially those appropriate for pre-seminary students.

The continuing growth in enrollment from the mid-1950’s increased the need for student housing. The four new residences on campus could not accommodate enough students, so the Board secured the services of real estate attorneys to evaluate and negotiate
the purchase of apartment houses within a mile of the campus for student housing.

From 1959 through 1967, Concordia was able to acquire seven buildings as they became available in the area. In 1959 the Thornton property was purchased on Hamline Avenue, but the home on the land only housed about a dozen students. In 1960, twin apartment buildings were acquired on Marshall Avenue at Hamline. On November 4 they were dedicated and named Mary and Martha Halls, appropriately housing 25 senior women each.

The remaining acquisitions were larger apartment buildings that were converted originally into residences for women. Some of the units now fill the need for married-student housing while larger units are available for older families such as those in which a spouse is preparing for a second career. Since 1960 the Board has selected names for apartment buildings which memorialize professors who died while serving Concordia.

In 1961, the four-plex at 1287 Dayton Avenue became Schlueter Hall. Professor August Schlueter was teaching foreign languages at his death in 1926. His wife Belva later married Professor Paul W. Stor.

Later in 1961, the apartment building at 1280 Marshall was purchased and named Moenkemoeller Hall in memory of Professor William Monkemoeller who taught languages, history, and religion for 28 years until his death in 1933.

In 1965, the building at 1232 Marshall assumed the name Dobberfuhl Hall. Professor William A. Dobberfuhl was music director for 12 of the 13 years at Concordia in addition to teaching four languages. He died in 1954.

In 1967, Concordia leased, and later exercised its option to buy, 316 N. Lexington Parkway. The building was named Berger Hall in honor of Professor John W. Berger, who died in 1957 after teaching German and Humanities for 26 years.

It is obviously only coincidental that all four residences acquired after 1960 and apart from the main campus are named after language professors who were called heavenward before they could retire. However, this does not support the contention of students that too much foreign language study threatens the health of students, especially those in the pre-seminary program.

The steady increase in student enrollment was partially the result
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of improved public relations and recruitment efforts that began in the 1950's. During Easter vacations and several additional weekends in the spring, as many as ten different faculty members would travel the five states contiguous to Minnesota, making home visits to prospective students. The director of recruitment was Professor Eugene Linse who encouraged an active communication network between Concordia and the congregations of the districts. The chief administrator of the program was Mrs. Gertrude Heuer, whose exceptional management skills brought many students and countless blessings to the campus.

Mrs. Gertrude Heuer was a unique and tireless contributor to Concordia's growth for over two decades. She had served as president of the Concordia Guild, a women's organization with representatives from supporting congregations who have been raising funds for scholarships and non-budgeted campus improvements since 1931. She understood the working dynamics of the campus. She "lived" Concordia even when she wasn't working in some department or area of campus life. She was truly a Concordia family member because her husband, Eugene Heuer, Sr., had served on the Board of Control; her father-in-law, the Reverend Karl Heuer, was a professor at Concordia for nine years; and her son Eugene Heuer, Jr., had been a faculty member since 1951. Her efficient and effective work in recruitment and public relations was partially the result of her extensive knowledge of the constituency, especially the pastors and teachers who were Concordia alumni. As an individual who greatly helped Concordia serve the church better in this midwest region, Mrs. Gertrude Heuer was one of the humble heroines of Concordia's first century. She entered the church triumphant in 1974.

Concordia's high school was numerically the dominant portion of the student body from its beginning until the campus became coeducational. The finalized four-year program with its greater enrollment required a complete separation of the secondary and college programs, from faculty to facilities. The high school had prospered for years because pre-ministerial students needed a rigorous academic program with three foreign languages. The consolidation of numerous small secondary schools in rural areas improved the academic offerings of the new larger schools. A decrease in foreign language requirements also lessened the need for
schools like Concordia High School. Thus a combination of fewer secondary students, the need for the eight classrooms used by the high school, and the accrediting agencies’ insistence on a complete separation required a recommended relocation of Concordia High School.

The complete separation began in 1967 after extensive planning and negotiation with the St. Paul Lutheran High School Association. The Association owned a school less than ten years old and in a new facility about six miles north of Concordia in suburban Roseville. The opportunity for consolidation seemed ideal.

The merger was to be completed over a four-year span. When classes began in September 1967, a new Concordia Academy was born. The name would officially become Concordia Academy. The principal was Professor James Rahn and the guidance counselor was Professor Eugene Heuer, Jr. Five additional faculty made the transition and joined the former Lutheran High faculty. With this rearrangement the new Concordia was permitted to keep its North Central Accreditation and have time to meet all of the criteria for renewed accreditation by the next campus visitation.

Resident students who had lived in Luther Hall previously were permitted to use this residence hall and were bussed to the new Concordia until they graduated. Likewise, the synodical subsidy for these resident students declined as each class graduated. At the end of the four years, Concordia Academy was fully owned and operated by the St. Paul Lutheran High School Association. Four of the transitional faculty members returned to Concordia College while the remainder either retired or accepted employment in another setting.

The 74-year era of the synodical all-male high school ended at Concordia College in 1971. The majority of its 2,146 graduates continued their education for professional service in the church. To better reflect its mission and to suggest the quality of its educational program, Concordia College High had previously begun the process of changing its name to Concordia Academy in 1963 in a more official way.

Following one of the last accreditation reviews before the merger, the chair of the visitation team, and a veteran of many school visits, reported that Concordia was undoubtedly one of the finest high schools in the state. It is certain there are many alumni who readily agreed.
In the years of mushrooming enrollments and campus growth, several factors made it possible for President Poehler to oversee 4.3 million dollars of new construction. Subsidy from the Missouri Synod totaled over one-third of the annual income. A number of costly programs necessary for Concordia’s operation at its centennial year were not a significant part of costs in those years. Examples are Financial Aid, Admissions, Public Relations, and Financial Management. A third factor was a budget that was automatically ten percent less on the expenditure side than on its income side. The result was an accumulated surplus which the Board designated local funds. These local funds permitted projects to be completed when synodical capital funds or other pledged gifts were insufficient to pay construction costs.

During the summer of 1968, President Poehler presided over a bold new venture among Minnesota private colleges when he introduced the community to the Metropolitan Teacher Education Program Selection (M-TEPS). An advisory committee of local business, civic, and professional leaders not only endorsed the concept of the program, but they also provided some financial support to help make it successful. M-TEPS was a project to enroll 25 minority students each year from the Twin Cities and surrounding communities who could provide an ongoing supply of minority elementary teachers for public education in the seven-county metropolitan area. But unlike some other minority programs, M-TEPS students had minimum financial resources and had rarely been encouraged to consider attending college while in high school.

The key person in the program was Professor Maurice Britts, who was on leave from the Minneapolis Public School System. As coordinator of M-TEPS, he personally contacted, visited, and evaluated individuals who had the personal qualities and a realistic chance to succeed. The majority of the students were black, but some Native Americans also enrolled. The program included personal counseling, peer support groups, specialized tutors if needed, careful academic planning, and a study environment on campus to encourage success.

Although federal funds, foundation grants, corporate gifts, and local funds provided the students with major financial support, the M-TEPS program was not a charity program. Most students had part-time or full-time job responsibilities to meet some of their educa-
tional expenses. The most important dimension of the M-TEPS experience may have been the students’ perception that they were programmed for success.

This imaginative venture was commended by the North Central Association as a fine example of one way in which a small college could help solve society’s race problems.

The overabundance of elementary teachers in the past decade has decreased the attractiveness of the M-TEPS program. However, the graduates of the program include a significant portion of the minority teachers and administrators in the public schools of the Twin Cities who have strongly endorsed their professional preparation in education at Concordia.

Before Concordia could celebrate its 75th anniversary in 1968, it had to complete preparations for another major accreditation evaluation. The teacher education program had been carefully examined by the faculty through its self-study and preparation of the request for an evaluation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Professor Luther Mueller authored the self-study report and schooled the faculty for the anticipated on-site investigation.

The six-member team representing NCATE visited campus on October 21–23, 1968. Their comprehensive, in-depth appraisal of teacher education at Concordia involved interviews and observations with all academic divisions, faculty committees, student groups, and many others related to teacher education in some way. That team also visited cooperating teachers and schools used for student teaching by Concordia students.

Even though the evaluation team’s 45 page report seemed encouraging and favorable, the official decision was months away. Finally at its regular spring meeting on May 14–16, 1969, Concordia was granted accreditation for the program for preparing elementary teachers at the bachelor’s degree level. The approval was effective retroactive to September 1, 1968.

NCATE accreditation is a commendable achievement for any educational program, but it is especially noteworthy to achieve that status in a seven-year period. The first junior class began in 1962 and the first senior class to graduate from a fully-accredited college was in 1969.

In September 1968, the monumental and comprehensive His-
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tory of Concordia College by Professor Oswald B. Overn became available for distribution. In 1962 the Board of Control requested Professor Overn to accept this challenging project after he retired from full-time service in 1963. For over four years, as professor on modified service, he completed this labor of love for the 75th anniversary of Concordia College. In appreciation the Board gave him an honorarium of $100.

The focus of Concordia’s diamond jubilee celebration was the Anniversary Week of December 2–8, 1968. The variety of activities included four early-evening concerts, a style show of early 20th-century dress sponsored by the Concordia Guild, a historical pageant directed by Professor Herbert Treichel, two basketball games and a wrestling match, an anniversary banquet in the Lutheran Memorial Center followed by a one-act drama especially written for the occasion by alumnus the Reverend Robert Clausen, and a concert by all musical groups with the first performance of an anniversary work written by Daniel Moe. The culminating event of the week was the Sunday afternoon anniversary service, with academic processional, in the LMC, featuring alumnus the Reverend Oswald Hoffmann as speaker.

The recurrent theme of the week was the bountiful goodness and blessing of the Lord of the Church upon Concordia during its 75 years of education for service in church and community.

The growth of the academic program required additional faculty and related academic and financial services. Since space for expansion in existing buildings was nonexistent, Synod approved funds for an administrative wing. After additional study of needs and availability of building areas, the decision was made to design a three-story building to be placed between Luther Hall and the existing administration building with offices extending toward Syndicate Street. This new structure could eventually be used for all administrative areas, and the old Administration Building would be used exclusively for classrooms.

Bids for the new administrative wing were opened on May 6, 1969. The contracts accepted for the complete project totaled $485,294. $425,000 of this sum had been allocated to this building from the synodical Ebenezer Thankoffering. During construction in the following year, several atypical problems arose including the bankruptcy of one contractor and the bonding company going out
of business. Thus Concordia became its own bonding company with additional attorney fees. In spite of the difficulties, the first two floors of the building were nearing completion by the end of the academic year in May 1970. The third floor was not scheduled for completion until it was needed.

With impending changes in the presidency of Concordia College in the near future, the Board of Control resolved in its May 14, 1970, meeting to set the date of dedication for the new administration building—no longer called wing—on June 3, 1970. This was probably the most unique service in Concordia's history. The dedication ceremony was held during the noon recess of the Minnesota South District Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on June 3, 1970. Dr. Arthur Ahlschwede, executive secretary of the Board for Higher Education of the Missouri Synod was invited as the speaker.

Ten days later on June 13, 1970, when the Board next met, President Poehler submitted his resignation as president of Concordia College, effective June 30, 1970. He had previously told the faculty and the Board that his strongest desire was to retire one year later so that the Music and Fine Arts Building, long in the planning stages, would be completed, and that he could complete 25 years as president of Concordia College. Since the synodical policy stated that a president could not begin a new year after he had attained the age of 65, the Board "with deep regret accepted this resignation, and resolved to continue his position on the faculty at the rank of full professor."

President Poehler had discussed with the Board at the previous meeting on May 14, 1970, his appointment to be vacancy administrator of California Concordia College in Oakland, California, under the direction of the Board for Higher Education. The Board encouraged President Poehler to accept this challenge after his resignation became effective. The Board felt his experience as a college administrator would benefit this sister institution in its possible relocation to Irvine, California. In the fall of 1970, President Poehler accepted this appointment and completed his 25th year as a synodical college president in California.

The years of Dr. W. A. Poehler's presidency were a period of notable change and growth. While his successes were numerous,
there were goals unattainable in spite of his most determined perseverance.

After the interstate highway project took Concordia’s football field, he tried for over four years to get the city of St. Paul to transfer slightly more than four acres of Dunning Field to Concordia for its athletic program. He and Concordia’s legal counsel tried all avenues: purchase, trade, negotiated usage, and other alternatives. On one occasion when success seemed probable, $5,000 in earnest money was accepted. However, as political opposition increased, the potential sale finally ended with an appeal to the state supreme court. The final irony was that the first president of Concordia had helped establish Dunning Field as a perpetual playground for the children of St. Paul so that an act of the legislature would be needed to change its usage. President Poehler and the Board reluctantly accepted the return of its earnest money from the City of St. Paul on January 13, 1966.

Another time-consuming project which President Poehler had hoped to see completed during his incumbency was the Music and Fine Arts Building. By April 1970, the projected building costs for a pared down Music Building were $749,700, but the pledges were only $720,000. Concordia had requested neighboring synodical districts to pledge funds which might be gathered in a 75th anniversary collection. The districts had difficulty subscribing to the requested amounts, so the Music Building would remain on the agenda, along with a new student union, for Concordia’s next president.

Dr. W. A. Poehler provided Concordia with dynamic academic leadership that rarely accepted the status quo. “Growth In Service” was not just a motto for Concordia College, it was part of his ever-changing vision for tomorrow. He was always looking for new ways for the church to serve God’s people. Two months before he left the presidency, he had just received approval for a proposed director of Christian education program. He assumed the leadership of an unaccredited six-year all-male school, and he left a fully-accredited coeducational four-year college whose goal was to provide professional and lay leadership for the church of today and tomorrow.
WILLY AUGUST POEHLER, 1904–1971

Near Courtland, Minnesota, on July 9, 1904, Willy August Poeher was born to Herman F. and Mary Havemeier Poeher. He attended the parish school of rural Immanuel Lutheran Church and the public school in Courtland. After his first year of high school in neighboring New Ulm, he spent the next five years completing the high school and junior college pre-ministerial curriculum at Concordia College in St. Paul, graduating in 1924. He spent the next two years in theological study at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He then served a two-year vicarage at Kelowna, British Columbia, and at Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada. He returned to the seminary for his final year and graduated in 1929 with his bachelor of divinity degree.

On July 16, 1929, he was married to Justine Schneidmiller of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. They later became the parents of four daughters: Zona, Bernadine, Elisabeth and Theodora.

Following his seminary graduation, he received a call to serve as a missionary in China. However, a severe illness of several months' duration prohibited his acceptance of the call to foreign missions. After regaining his health in early 1930, he accepted a call to St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Wood Lake, Minnesota. In 1935 he was called to become the pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Morristown, Minnesota, where he spent the next five years. In 1940 he became pastor of Trinity First Lutheran in Minneapolis. During
his pastorate at Trinity he earned a master of arts degree in German and sociology at the University of Minnesota.

In May 1946, Pastor W. A. Poehler was called to become the third president of Concordia College. He began his term as president on August 1, 1946, and served until he reached mandatory retirement on June 30, 1970. During his professional life, he preferred to use William for his first name, or he would use the initials W. A. for his personal signature. His 24-year tenure as president was a period of unparalleled academic expansion and physical growth.

In 1954 he received the doctor of philosophy degree in higher education from the University of Minnesota. Concordia Seminary, then located in Springfield, Illinois, recognized his educational leadership in the church by awarding him the honorary doctor of divinity degree in 1965.

Dr. W. A. Poehler served his church and community on numerous boards and commissions such as the Missouri Synod Curriculum Commission and the St. Paul Human Civil Rights Commission. He authored *Religious Education Through the Ages* and numerous articles and book reviews.

President Poehler had an inveterate love of travel. In pursuit of this hobby, usually accompanied by Mrs. Poehler, he visited Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe, South America, and much of North America.

After leaving his post in St. Paul, Dr. Poehler served as interim president of California Concordia College in Oakland from the fall of 1970 until his sudden death on December 9, 1971, while visiting in the Twin Cities.

The funeral service for the Reverend Doctor William A. Poehler was held on December 13, 1971, at Trinity First Lutheran Church in Minneapolis where he had served as pastor and had been installed as president of Concordia College. The committal service was in Courtland.