



# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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## In memory of Melvina Aaberg 1926 ~ 2011



Melvina was a friend and supporter of the ELS Historical Society, and especially so in recent years when she worked part time in the ELS Archives. The editors asked Synod President John Moldstad and Seminary President Gaylin Schmeling to each write about working with Melvina. Blessed be her memory.

*Only a few days before Melvina was taken to her heavenly home with her Savior by means of an automobile accident, I had opportunity to greet her publicly on behalf of our synod as she celebrated her 85<sup>th</sup>. It was a day of celebration and several speakers drew attention to how blessed our synod and seminary were as a result of Melvina's dedicated service as office secretary.*

*Personally, I want to say how wonderful it was in my first two years serving as synod president to have Melvina in the office, knowing where things were, how things had been done, and – more importantly – conveying a spirit and atmosphere of Christian friendship in and around our building. Thinking of how God used Melvina and her cheery disposition (and superb kringla), I am reminded of what Peter wrote in his first letter: “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9). May the Lord preserve her memory in our midst.*

J. A. Moldstad

*Melvina was the secretary of the seminary for 28 years. After the synod presidency became full time, she was also the secretary for the synod president. During that time, she was the friendly face of the seminary and synod. When a call was made to the seminary or the synod office, the warm, kind voice of Melvina was heard. She understood the internal workings and administration of the seminary and synod and had everything in hand. I know what a help she was for me when I came to Mankato in 1997. I don't know what I would have done without her. I appreciated her counsel, advice, and friendship. The same was true for Pres. Petersen, Pres. Orvick, and Pres. Moldstad.*

*Melvina typed many important essays for the Lutheran Synod Quarterly and other documents for the synod and seminary. She typed and proofed her husband's entire book, A City Set on a Hill, which is an extremely valuable source of our synod's history. In the past year, Melvina showed her talents as an author. She produced an excellent book of memoirs, entitled My Memories, which gives her family history, congregational histories, and a considerable amount of synod history.*

*Melvina was a mother to many of the seminarians, offering scones, kringla, lefse, and clementine cake. Her warm smile, encouraging hugs, counsel, and advice brought warmth and Norwegian kindness to the seminary. She brought comfort to many a down-hearted seminarian.*

G.R. Schmeling

From the Bethany Lutheran College website:

## Bethany names building in honor of former board chair

The Bethany Lutheran College Board of Regents unanimously resolved at their August 2011 meeting to name the former Seminary/ Bethany Communication Center in honor of the Reverend Milton E. Tweit. Tweit served Bethany Lutheran College as a Regents member for 56 years (21 years as chairman). Both are records for board service.



Milton E. Tweit

Tweit also served as the chairman of the building committee that authorized and oversaw the construction of the building now bearing his name. The building [now serves] the art and health science departments.

Naming a building in Tweit's honor is also significant because it marks the first time a Bethany facility has been named for someone that has not been directly employed by the college.

President Dan Bruss said of the decision, "It is indeed a fitting honor for a man who dedicated his life to the ongoing welfare of Bethany Lutheran College."



*Editor's note:*

*In connection with the naming ceremony for Milton Tweit Hall which took place on September 17, 2011, following are excerpts from a piece Norman Teigen submitted about Rev. Tweit's high school and college days at Concordia-St. Paul, that was prepared for his 95th birthday in 2003. The introduction says, "We cannot think of any other family that we have both known for so long and so well. The friendship began in those Concordia-St. Paul years and continues on... You were Bjarne's classmate at Concordia and his work mate in service to the Lord in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod..." [Bjarne Teigen was Norman Teigen's father.]*

*You may also wish to read or re-read the article "Interview with the Rev. Milton E. Tweit (1908-2005)" by Jeff Merseth & Lisa Burcham (now Petersen) in Oak Leaves, Summer 2005, Volume 9, Issue 2, pages 7-11. It is on the website listed on page 12 of this issue, [www.els-history.org](http://www.els-history.org)*

## Milton E. Tweit

The Concordia-St. Paul Years 1924-1930

by Norman Teigen

Milton Tweit went off to Concordia-St. Paul in 1925 because he wanted to get off the farm but he wasn't sure that he would enter the ministry. He would have to think about it and he would have six years to do so. The expected destination for a would-be Norwegian pastor might have eventually been Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. However, the union of varied Norwegian Lutherans by 1917 without regard to agreement on doctrine sent him to the German Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod sympathized with the minority Norwegians who refused to go along with the 1917 merger and encouraged them to go on their way alone. Missouri made that synod's educational system available to young Norwegians who wanted to study for the ministry. This agreement brought Milton to Concordia-St. Paul and eventually to Concordia-St. Louis where he graduated in 1935.

By 1925 Concordia-St. Paul was a growing institution. The Missouri Synod had owned the school since 1893 and graduated its first class in 1907. The first buildings were those built by the state of Minnesota for use as a juvenile reformatory. In

1913 a gymnasium had been built and a recitation hall was added in 1918. A new dormitory was put up in 1925 to accommodate the growing student body.

The student paid \$100 in annual board fees and another \$7.50 for student activities, breakage, and laboratory. The school consisted of six classes; high school freshman through college sophomore. The curriculum was based on the classics, languages, and religion. The Concordia track was thin on science and mathematics and long on Latin, German, Greek, and Hebrew. Most of the professors were ordained pastors. There were no women on the faculty. In fact, there were no women in the student body.



Milton Tweit on the right

Student life was carefully regulated. Daily Chapel was compulsory mornings and evenings. All meals were taken on campus. Dating was not encouraged and a student could get into trouble for dating a non-Lutheran girl. Smoking was not forbidden but popular music was. The faculty wanted to stop this music but it couldn't be done. Study hours were from 7 to 9 p.m. Movies were shown on campus on Fridays but were carefully censored and monitored to keep unhealthy scenes from the students. These were the days when movies were gaining great popular interest because of the transition from silent films to speaking movies.

Milton Tweit's name [usually spelled "Twite"] can be found many times in the student newspaper, The Concordia Comet. On February 19, 1930, President Martin Graebner addressed a business men's club and brought along the Concordia College Quartette, composed of A. Schultz, F. Krinke, Paul Stephan, and Milton

Tweit. In the same issue of the Comet, it is reported that "Prof. Overn demonstrated the principles of thunder and lightning in the physics laboratory. 'Stix' Gade and 'Tony' Twite played the role of the lightning god by turning the crank of the apparatus."

Milton Tweit sang in the Glee Club, played drums in the orchestra, and tenor sax in the band. A Comet story said: "K. Anderl has organized an octet again. The personnel are ... and Milton Twite, second bass. Basing our statements on the success of former organizations which were led by the able Anderl, we can predict this octet will be a success."

Band was a new activity at Concordia in 1929. The Comet reported: "No doubt the greatest step forward in the interest of music at our institution this year was the organization of a College Band. ... Much credit is due President Graebner, E. Teigen and M. Twite through whose untiring efforts it was made possible. ... At present 23 members have been corralled, handed an instrument, and have been commanded thus: 'Now Pipe.' The members are piping."

The students had a radio "which was presented to the school several years ago by the Alumni Association [and] has again been put into working order thru the efforts of Professor Overn. While the World Series and the Minnesota football games are on the air it is the most sought for and popular thing on campus."

The new dormitory of 1925...was the home for almost all the students. ... Each pair of rooms accommodates four persons, and there are twenty-six pairs. ... One of the four roommates was an upper classman known as a "buck" and for at least one year, Milton Tweit's buck was my uncle Neelak Tjernagel. The other two persons in the room were Erling and Bjarne Teigen.



Milton Tweit at bottom left

Not all of the boys made it through the system. [Of one student it was reported] “At the present time he is working as a brakeman for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad. We wish him success in his new occupation. He would not be the first railroad president who started as a brakeman.” [Of another student, He] “is at home near Red Wing, Minnesota putting the old farm on a paying basis.”

The last information about a student at Concordia College was the individual profile in the graduation issue of the Comet. Here is Milton Twite’s: “Milton E. Twite. ‘Tony’ is the sole survivor of the original ‘Norwegian Settlement’ that suffered severe persecution under the tyrannical Canadian, Henry Fry (’28). He is the originator of the ‘Bull Frog Shamble,’ not a dance, but an expression of glee. He is very talented in other lines. He sings bass, but his laugh is in the range of an alto. That reminds us of the fact that he also plays the alto



horn. He takes strenuous exercise in the form of trap-drumming. Too bad that some fellows took his *Uke* away from him and broke it! ‘Tony’ is also a conspicuous figure in the world of Sports. Nobody could possibly forget the figure he cuts in basketball togs. He resembles a bantam rooster doing bat-

tle with a flock of turkey gobblers. One of his many pastimes is study. He has actually been caught indulging in this recreation. Sen. Borah and he have something in common — Campaigning. ‘Tony’ bribed, shot, and pushed his way into the office of High Potentate of Prima (Class President).”

After six years at Concordia, aided by the influence of the faculty, and his friends, Neelak Tjernagel and Erling Teigen, Milton decided to study for the ministry. In the Fall of 1930 he entered Concordia Seminary in St. Louis where he would graduate in 1935. ■

## Koren Family Visits Bethany by Mark O. Harstad



Monday, October 17, 2011, was a day to remember for the Ottesen Museum, our Historical Society, the College and Seminary, and the Synod in general. Thirty-two members of the Koren family from Norway were our guests for a few hours on a beautiful Indian summer afternoon. These people are connected with the extended Koren family which included the pioneer pastor and synod father Ulrik Vilhelm Koren (1826-1910). They ranged in age from teenagers to those along in years. The primary purpose of the group for being in the USA was to attend the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Pastor U. V. Koren was among those who were directly involved in getting that institution started. The anniversary event also brought the royal couple King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway to the USA.

One member of the visiting group, Pastor Vemund Koren, had come to know about our church body through a chance contact several years ago with former synod pastor Ronald Mathison. Vemund spent time at Luther Seminary in the Twin Cities, and during that time came to know Pastor Mathison, who was also present throughout the visit.

Ottesen Museum Program Director Becky DeGarmeaux spent many hours in planning for the visit. She had prepared a full agenda for the group to visit the Museum, the Seminary, and the College. The group traveled from Decorah to Mankato in six mini-vans. Complications in co-

ordinating the movement of such a large caravan resulted in a late arrival in Mankato; so, Becky's careful preparations had to be modified quickly. But with the cooperation of the BLC Food Service crew and many others, the visit turned out to be a very good experience for all involved.



First stop for the group was the Seminary and Synod Building where they were welcomed by President Gaylin Schmeling. A photo opportunity in the Seminary chapel included the singing of the Norwegian National Anthem, *Ja, Vi Elsker Dette Landet*.



Two college students then took the group on a quick tour of the college campus which ended at the Honsey Building, where we were served a beautiful luncheon in the style of an American summer picnic with hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, corn on the cob, watermelon, and other delectables.



Synod President John Moldstad and College President Dan Bruss spoke words of welcome to the group at the luncheon. Several members of the Historical Society Board also intermingled with the guests at the attractively-set tables in the Honsey Hall Board Room. A beautiful portrait of U. V. Koren was presented to Synod President Moldstad. Mark DeGarmeaux addressed the group in Norwegian about his work as translator of various works of U. V. Koren into English.



The visit of the Norwegians ended at the Ottesen Museum where explanations of the Museum's purpose and contents were provided for the guests by Becky DeGarmeaux and Mark Harstad. Copies of the series of articles on U. V. Koren which had appeared in *The Lutheran Sentinel* during the year 2010 were made available to each member of the visiting group.

This was a noteworthy experience to have this contact with people from Norway who have family connections to Pastor U. V. Koren. The visitors manifested keen interest in the fact that Pastor Koren is still held in high regard by those who want to preserve the theological legacy which he helped to establish. ■



# Norman and Violet Holte

Interviewed by BLC Student Annie Williams  
Mankato MN, April 2010



## Biographical

Norman Holte was born January 7, 1918 in Eddy Township, Minnesota. Out of seven children he was the youngest. He attended a one-room public school, with up to fifty students at one time. He attended Concordia Lutheran Church in Clearbrook, Minnesota. It was at Bethany Lutheran College where Norman met his wife, Violet. They were classmates from 1940-1942. After graduating from Bethany, Norman planned to go to the University of Minnesota but ultimately changed his mind. "This was WW II," Mr. Holte said. "I couldn't go to college." Mr. Holte had been called up for duty, but had been rejected due to a heart murmur. Mr. Holte then moved to Richmond, California, for two years and worked in the shipyards. Upon his return to Minnesota, Mr. Holte enrolled at the University of Minnesota. During his time there, he received a letter from Dr. Sigurd Ylvisaker, inviting him to teach high school and college at Bethany. He looked to his advisor, Dr. Krey, for guidance, who told him that he thought it would be a wonderful experience and he considered "Doc" (as Dr. Krey called Ylvisaker) "one of the outstanding educators of Minnesota."

Norman Holte married Violet Fevig in 1947 after he returned from California. Violet had spent this time teaching in Christian day schools, including Sauk Rapids, Long Prairie, and Norseland. Mr. and Mrs. Holte had four children, all of whom attended Bethany Lutheran College. They have nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren [as of October 2011, they have 11 great-grandchildren].

## Bethany Lutheran College

Mr. Holte started teaching at Bethany Lutheran High School and College in 1945. He was a professor and also the registrar from 1952 until he was elected president in 1978. "I told them I would serve for four years and then I would be sixty-five and not go beyond that," Mr. Holte



said. During his time at Bethany, Mr. Holte traveled to Washington, D.C. and Chicago to speak about accreditation. Bethany Lutheran College was granted a ten-year accreditation. His biggest challenges during his presidency were budget problems as well as enrollment, which he hoped to increase. After his presidency, Mr. Holte continued to teach part-time at Bethany for three years. Mr. Holte also served on the Board for

Christian Charities and Support and on the synod doctrine committee for a few years. He left the board after he became president.

The biggest changes at Bethany Lutheran College that the Holtes spoke about were the physical ones. "Meyer Hall has been added, the chapel, and Honsey Hall — it's a big change from when we were students, and we only had Old Main." The other differences that the Holtes noted were the growing number of Ph.D.'s in the faculty, Bethany changing from a two-year college to a four-year college, and the rules that were enforced on campus. "Lights out at ten o'clock, and everyone had to be in by ten o'clock. We had to get special permission from the dean to go out during the week, and movies were closely monitored. Faculty members would be stationed in front of the movie theater." The men were not allowed in the women's dorm except on Sunday evenings in the reception room. The only thing that has not changed, according to the Holtes, is "the 'one thing needful' that is always there."

### Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The biggest change the Holtes recalled about the history of the ELS was the separation from the synodical conference. When the ELS withdrew, there was criticism that they had not withdrawn earlier. Because of the split, Immanuel Lutheran in Mankato, Minnesota, left the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Bethany lost both students and support from that congregation. WWII also affected the ELS and Bethany Lutheran College, as it resulted in a number of veterans attending Bethany. During his time as registrar at Bethany, Mr. Holte dealt with the Veterans Administration (VA) because he was in charge of the students' records.



### Mrs. Holte

Mrs. Holte was born November 27, 1920 on a homestead near Volt, Montana. Her family

moved back to Minnesota and lived on a farm in Clay County near Ulen, Minnesota. She attended Bethany Lutheran High School for three years and then came back to attend Bethany Lutheran College. Her main influences for going to Bethany were her sister, her pastor, and her parents, who "were anxious to have me go to a Christian school." One of her biggest thrills was singing in the choir for three years in high school and two years in college. "The first song we learned was 'On My Heart Imprint Thine Image.' I had learned it in Norwegian as a child. My mother had sung it to me." During the years Mr. Holte was president, Mrs. Holte said that she did not feel very capable. She wanted to do what she had seen other presidents' wives do, but she had polio so she was limited. She enjoyed Faculty Women's Club and the Women's Auxiliary.

### Synod Archives

Mr. Holte was in charge of the synod archives for five or six years, working with Walther Gullixson after Gullixson set up the archives. He was also influential in starting the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society. ■



Editor's note: Mr. and Mrs. Holte worked together on these and other projects. Mr. Holte was the woodworker and Mrs. Holte learned how to rosemal by reading books as she was not able to get to a class.



## S. C. Ylvisaker — 1950 Synodical Conference Address by Erling T. Teigen



S. C. Ylvisaker

In the summer of 2010, the WELS Historical Society presented a summer series on “Great Sermons of the Past.” A lecture by Prof. Mark Braun of Wisconsin Lutheran College focused on “sermons” preached by Prof. Carl Lawrenz, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President in 1961, and by Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker, in 1950, who had just retired from the presidency of Bethany Lutheran College. The DVD presentation, produced by the WELS Historical Society, led me to re-read Ylvisaker’s address, which I had read in connection with other research.

Ylvisaker’s presentation was not, in fact, a sermon, but was the opening presidential address at the 1950 convention of the Synodical Conference. Ylvisaker was the second of three vice-presidents of the conference. The president, E. B. Schlueter, was seriously ill and could not attend, so the three vice-presidents divided the presidential duties and to Ylvisaker fell the task of presenting a presidential address.

It was a time when very weighty matters confronted the Conference. For over ten years, questions of the relationship between the Missouri Synod and American Lutheran Church (the 1930 merger of the Iowa, Ohio, and Buffalo synods, referred to as ALC-

1930) had troubled some members of the conference — some within Missouri, but especially the Wisconsin and Norwegian (ELS) synods.

In 1938 at their convention in Sandusky, Ohio, the ALC-1930 had adopted “Declaration” which was a response to the Missouri Synod’s 1932 “Brief Statement.” In 1938 the Missouri Synod accepted “Declaration” to stand beside the Missouri Synod’s “Brief Statement.” The Norwegian Synod Union Committee (today called the Doctrine Committee) referred to this as “too much like the forbidden plowing ‘with an ox and an ass together’ (Deut. 22:10)” (Our Relations with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, p. 5). Through the 1940s, other issues plagued the Synodical Conference churches besides the question of “Unionism” — military chaplaincy, Boy Scouts, and prayer fellowship. In 1949 the ALC-1930 and LCMS presented a document called Common Confession Part I, which presented the doctrines on which the ALC and Missouri Synod agreed. It was followed in 1952 by Part II which dealt with the matters on which there had been disagreement. So, in 1950, by the time of the meeting of the Synodical Conference, Missouri had agreed with the ALC-1930 on doctrines which had never been disputed, and this appeared to be the basis for a declaration of doctrinal agreement and church fellowship.

This was the setting in which Ylvisaker prepared the presidential address which he would present as second vice-president. The address was sermonic in that it began with a text: Genesis 22:1, “God did tempt [test] Abraham” (Ylvisaker was using the King James translation). The test was the command to sacrifice Isaac. Ylvisaker sketched the blessings that had fallen to the Synodical Conference, just as Abraham had been blessed. But then he commented on the feeling of self-satisfaction and satisfaction with speaking in generalities: “Sin has its deep roots in pride, and pride rises up against the simple Word, today as ever of old.” Ylvisaker then set his outline: “There are three special areas where it is apparent that God is tempting [testing] us: the doctrines of Unionism, of Prayer, [and] of the

Church and the Ministry. When we add the questions of the Chaplaincy and the Boy Scouts, these are only as phases of the others.”

As to unionism, there are several questions which arise. Union documents, Ylvisaker suggests, have been coming with fewer and fewer Bible passages and less thoroughness. They have not included antitheses, that is, theses which state what false teaching is rejected, in addition to what is affirmed. Ylvisaker quotes Psalm 74:23: “Forget not the voice of thine enemies.” In his warning about unionism, Ylvisaker concludes that the lesson of church history is that “It is the unionist who forgets the past and the lessons of the past. It is the unionist who would shorten and generalize and confuse.... It is the faithful Abraham, who God also today sends as a blessing to the Church, who carefully marks what the Word of God says both by command and by promise, that the Church of the future may be blessed and remain a blessing. Let us pray that we may continue to be such a church and such a witness.”

The matter of prayer fellowship had been discussed since 1940, and had special prominence in the so-called “Chicago Statement,” a statement signed by forty-four Missouri pastors and theologians, including one of Ylvisaker’s former Bethany Lutheran College colleagues. While the statement had many good observations, it was especially alarming in its statements about prayer fellowship and unionism. The Synodical Conference had never made a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint prayer. That was a distinction made first in the ALC-1930, and which the Missouri Synod only recognized officially in 1953. Ylvisaker first portrays the way “our flesh would reason.” The danger, however, in those arguments is that “prayer, too, is a confessional thing. If analyzed carefully, the argument for ‘joint prayer’ is an argument based on examples of casuistry where each one tries to apply Scripture to the individual difficult case as well as his Christian judgment will allow.” Ylvisaker makes it clear that this is not a debate about family

prayers or prayers in situations that are exceptional circumstances. The debate was about whether or not one could justify joint prayers in cases where there was not agreement in the faith and confession of the truth. “But any Christian should know that it is extremely hazardous to derive a Christian doctrine from such definitely human applications of the Word.”

The third issue to which Ylvisaker refers as a test is the matter of the doctrines of church and ministry, an issue which might be a little more immediate in the minds of our churches today. Ylvisaker thought that generally in the discussions of the matter in the Synodical Conference, there was a “drifting into a certain externalism which eventually would have led us into the error of the Papistic and other sectarian churches.” He observes that there has been “confusion with regard to a proper definition of the ministry of the Word, with regard to the Church and the Christian congregation, with regard to the offices in the Church, [and] with regard to the peculiar institution known as the chaplaincy.” And at the moment, that was perhaps the more burning issue. For Ylvisaker, the better solution might have been for the Synodical Conference, for example, to appeal to the War Office (Defense Department) to return to the situation in WWI in which “the Government might ...be willing to approve and recognize ministers of the Word for their necessary work, though sent and salaried by their home churches.” As it was, however, some in the Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin and Norwegian synods regarded the military chaplaincy not merely as a misunderstanding of the ministerial office, but clear unionism.

It is reported that in the course of Ylvisaker’s address, at least one person shouted loud objections from the balcony. Ylvisaker observes that “We have been frank and open in all of this. There is no other way if we seek a genuine cure,” and then returns to the Genesis text. But that was not quite the end of it. Appended to the address when it appeared in the Synodical Conference Proceedings is this note: “Dr. Ylvisaker declared before the convention that the above ad-

dress had not been submitted to the other officials of the Synodical Conference for approval, but that it presented his individual opinions. On recommendation by the standing Committee on Intersynodical Relations the convention resolved to attach the following statement to the presidential address: 'Missouri Synod members of the Committee on Intersynodical Relations are not in agreement with some of the opinions in the Presidential address'."

Ylvisaker's address does not seem to have had any decisive influence on the outcome of the intersynodical debates. In 1955 the ELS suspended fellowship with Missouri, and by 1963, first the ELS and then the Wisconsin Synod left the Synodical Conference. Missouri eventually absorbed the Slovak synod as a non-geographical district. In 1967, Missouri and the Slovak synod dissolved the Synodical Conference and joined with the ALC-1960 and the LCA in forming the Lutheran Council in the USA. In 1969, the Missouri Synod declared fellowship with the ALC-1960 which included the ELC (formerly the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America), and the ALC-1930. That union, however, lasted less than ten years, and was dissolved in 1977.

There is some irony in the fact that the catalyst which led S. C. Ylvisaker to resign from the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America in 1919 was its decision to join the National Lutheran Council, a unionistic organization. So when he was again confronted with a movement toward a similar outcome in his senior office as a Synodical Conference vice-president, he saw signs of danger and proceeded to say so, regardless of the consequences. It is a further irony, however, that though he intended to join his former Norwegian brethren in the "little" Norwegian Synod (ELS), he was in 1919 called by the Missouri Synod as a professor at Concordia College, St. Paul, where he served until being called to the Norwegian Synod congregation of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin in 1923, and then to Bethany Lutheran College in 1930, where he served as president until 1950. ■

## SCARVILLE LUTHERAN SCHOOL – A SHORT HISTORY

by Peter Faugstad

Editor's Note: The new book "*Telling the Next Generation, The Evangelical Lutheran Synod's Vision for Christian Education, 1918-2011 and Beyond,*" (available through the Bethany Bookstore or through the ELS Historical Society) prompted the editors to include an article about a Christian day school that might have been in existence for as long as Bethany's 100 years. We thought Scarville School might qualify. Peter Faugstad (a pastor at Parkland Lutheran Church, Parkland, WA) set us straight and directed us to the church web site; and below introduces us to the school he attended

A school was opened at Scarville Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1927. An account of this exciting venture was written in 1928 by the Rev. Justin A. Petersen for the *Jubilee Souvenir* (pp. 20-21), a publication commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Norwegian Synod.

### The Scarville School

Scarville, Iowa

*"This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Ps. 118, 23.*

These were the words of Holy Scripture that flashed through the mind of the undersigned as he hurried home from the special meeting of The Scarville Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation March 16, 1927; for at this memorable meeting this small congregation decided to establish and maintain a Christian day-school. And these words we wish to place as a superscription over the history of our school: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

"This is the Lord's doing," He, and He alone, brought it to pass. 'Tis true, He made use of men to further this work. The sainted Formand Torgerson prayerfully planted the seed, the Reverends A. J. Torgerson and Emil Hanson faithfully watered, but the Lord gave the increase. 1 Cor. 3, 7. And the present pastor was privileged to harvest. Verily, "this is the Lord's doing." Most forcibly was this truth impressed upon me as the preliminary steps towards the establishment of our school were taken. With what fear and trembling we approached the parents and other members of the congrega-

tion, and solicited both children and gifts for the school! Who was it that warmed and opened the hearts for this important and blessed cause? Surely, not our eloquence; for our tongue was well-nigh tied. There is but one answer: "This is the Lord's doing."

"It is marvelous in our eyes." The marvel of it increases when we consider the might of the many sworn enemies of the Christian day-school — for there is nothing that the devil and the world hates more than the Word of God—; when we think of the lukewarmness, aye downright indifference of our own hearts in the matter of daily feeding the souls of our children; when we further consider that this small congregation, consisting of fifteen families with a heavy debt on their hands, had the courage of Christian conviction at a representative congregational meeting to unanimously vote to establish a Christian day-school. Full of wonder we are moved to exclaim: "It is marvelous in our eyes."

The opening of our spiritual nursery was fittingly celebrated by divine services Sunday, September 4, the local pastor preaching the festival sermon in Norwegian in the forenoon, and the Rev. John Hartmeister of the Missouri Synod preaching the English sermon in the afternoon.

The following day the school commenced its work in the church basement. Now the word basement usually suggests a damp, dark place. Our basement, however, is several feet above the ground, is provided with ten large windows, is light, dry, and cozy — well suited for school purposes. There are thirteen pupils in the school — more are expected next year — and the attendance record has been almost perfect. The work has been progressing beyond expectations, and we have good grounds to believe that our school is daily growing in favor. The school has been under the teachership of Miss Laura Ingebritson, and we are deeply grateful to God for sending us a pious, able, and experienced teacher. We have been fortunate enough to secure her services for another year. Our first school officers are: School board, John Dale, Nels Brudvig, and Nels Faugstad; secretary, Andrew Brudvig; treasurer, John Dale.

May the Triune God in heaven continue to bless our school, and all our schools, to the glory of His great name, and the salvation of blood-bought souls! "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." Ps. 90, 16-17.

J. A. Petersen

In 1942, the school was forced to close due to lack of students. However, the Scarville congregation resolved to reopen it in the summer of 1957. In 1998, classes were moved from the church basement to a new school building. The current teacher of the school is Mrs. Carrie Enderson. The Rev. Thomas L. Rank teaches religion classes and Latin.

One final note of interest: Pastor Petersen and school board member Nels Faugstad, Sr., enrolled their children in the new school in 1927. Nels D. Faugstad and Camilla Petersen would later marry and send their children to the school. Their son and his wife (Jim & Emily Faugstad) in turn sent their children to the school. This is a cheerful example of God's persistent grace upon a family and a school!■

### Scarville Lutheran School Students 1927



(Information and pictures from the Scarville Lutheran website:  
<http://www.wctatel.net/web/scarvillelutheran/schoolhistory.htm>)

**Oak Leaves**  
ELS Historical Society  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

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