

# CELEBRATING THE 175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF WELS



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– John Bading, 1862 convention proceedings

## THE FOUNDING OF THE SEMINARY

The timing wasn't great. The Wisconsin Synod was quite small. Most of the members were recent immigrants who had not yet established themselves financially in their new homeland. There just wasn't much money to go around. The United States was in the middle of the Civil War. The Battle of Gettysburg was only about a month away.



**The Northwestern campus in the late 1880s;** the building on the right is the Kaffeemühle, the first building constructed on the campus in 1865.

Nevertheless, the synod in convention in 1863 followed the lead of the synod's president, John Bading, and resolved to establish a seminary of its own. The reasons were clear. The quantity of pastors the synod had been receiving from various sources was never enough. The quality of those pastors was often less than desirable.

Soon after the convention, Bading left on a journey to Germany and Russia to seek contributions for the new school. He brought back \$10,000 to Wisconsin.

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The seminary opened in Watertown, Wisconsin, in the fall of 1863. The beginnings were small. Dr. Edward Moldehnke was the only professor instructing one student in a rented house. That student was dismissed for disciplinary reasons in October, but another student enrolled in November.



**Seminary students** on the front steps of the Wauwatosa seminary building in the early 1900s.

In 1863 the synod also made plans to establish a college to prepare students for the seminary. The Watertown campus would also provide high school education. The first building was dedicated on Sept. 14, 1865, and Northwestern was born.

Soon after, the seminary moved to a different campus. The seminary (now known as Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) has had several homes throughout the years: Watertown (1863-1870), Milwaukee (1878-1893), Wauwatosa (1893-1929), and Mequon (1929-present). From 1870 to 1878, the synod's pastors were trained at the Missouri Synod's seminary in St. Louis for financial reasons. Our forefathers' hope for the future in 1863 turned into a blessed reality. Since 1863, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has graduated more than 3,800 men for the pastoral ministry.

Northwestern College served the synod on the Watertown campus until 1995, when it merged with Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, to form today's Martin Luther College. Luther Preparatory School continues pre-ministerial education on the original Watertown campus.

Learn more about the history of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.



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