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## The Western Mystic's 75th Anniversary Edition (1962)

Moorhead State College

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# The Western Mystic's 75th Anniversary Edition



The State Legislature of 1887 appropriated \$60,000 for the Moorhead Normal building and \$5,000 for its operating expenses; the cornerstone was laid in the summer of that year. In late August of 1888 the building was not quite completed when twenty-nine students drove up in horse and buggy to enroll. President Livingston C. Lord and a faculty of four were present to greet them.

As the school's first president, Dr. Lord was known for his unremitting energy and strict attention to business. When President Lord conducted the daily chapel exercises he demanded perfect attention to the extent that the pupils did not dare turn their heads. At the weekly Friday night programs, which displayed the amateur talent of students and faculty, the doors closed at one minute after eight o'clock, and no one was allowed to enter after that. Despite Dr. Lord's austere manner, the students somehow perceived him as their friend. During Livingston Lord's ten years at the school, he was very effective in winning the confidence and respect of the public for the Moorhead Normal, as shown by the expansion of enrollment, faculty, and curriculum.

Up until the end of the first quarter of the century, not one of the normal schools in Minnesota was of college rank. Most of the students were not high school graduates. The curriculum consisted of a review of elementary school subjects, methods of teaching, and pedagogy. Although quite inadequate when compared to present standards, these schools yet filled the vital need of providing teachers for the public schools.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The history of Moorhead State College was first printed in the 75th Anniversary Edition of the 1963 DRAGON. It has been copied here for the benefit of the alumni and other friends of the college.)

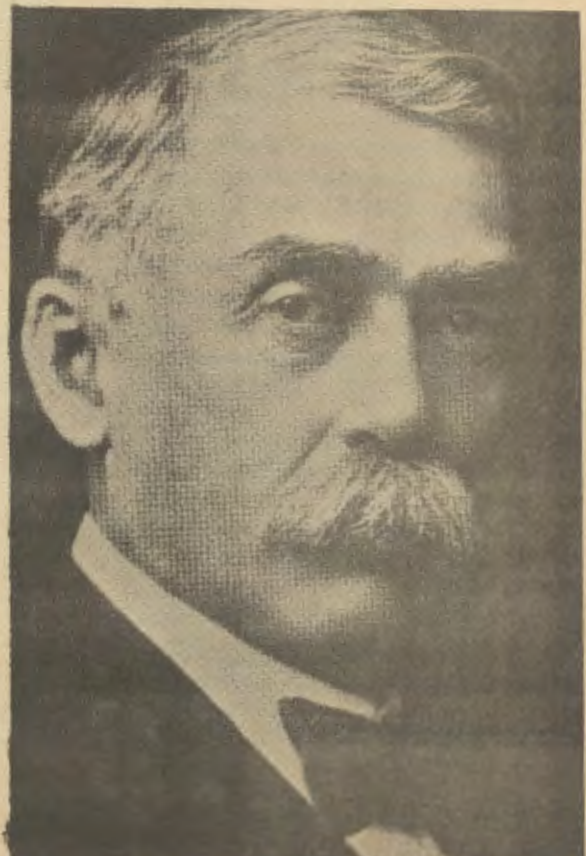
Our college, as a state-supported school, is a descendant of a development originated in 1837. At that time institutions of higher learning in this country did not train teachers for the common schools, especially the elementary and rural. To meet this need, the state legislature of Massachusetts initiated at Lexington a unique institution: the "normal" school.

Normal schools were established in Minnesota in August of 1858, when Governor Henry Sibley signed a bill for their authorization. The fourth such institution subsequently to be constructed in the state was the school at Moorhead.

The location of a normal school at Moorhead was due to the influence of the Honorable Solomon G. Comstock. As a state senator from Moorhead in 1885, Mr. Comstock was struck by the idea that "a normal school would be a very fine thing for the Red River county and especially for Moorhead." He therefore introduced a bill to establish a school here, provided the citizens would furnish six acres for its site. As the bill came before the Senate committee, Crookston proposed a similar bill to establish a normal school, and also offered \$5,000. Through Providence and the maneuvering of Solomon G. Comstock, Crookston's bill landed on the sidelines, and the 1885 State Legislature awarded the location of the normal school to Moorhead.

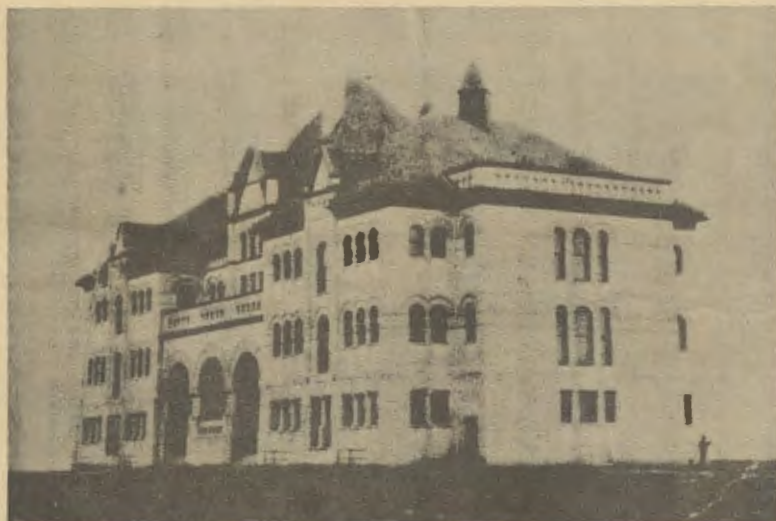
The bill had been passed on the condition that the community provide land for the site of the school, and Mr. Comstock himself met that condition by donating the required six acres. Mr. Comstock, who later became a Representative in the United States Congress, remained keenly interested in the development of the school built on his six acres and aided its progress by serving as a Resident Director. It is fitting that Mr. Solomon G. Comstock, as initiator, contributor, and director, should be known as the "Father of the College."

DR. LORD



Solomon G. Comstock had several good arguments to present to the legislature in support of his proposal to found a normal school at Moorhead. He pointed out that as the northern portion of the state was swiftly developing, a fourth school was necessitated. Since Moorhead was the prominent community of the Red River Valley region and a logical distance from the St. Cloud Normal School, it was appropriate that the legislature should select Moorhead. A further reason influencing the legislature's approval of Comstock's proposal was that Moorhead was an advantageous center of communication, as several railroads converged in the town.

The citizens of Moorhead were quite impressed by the huge structure of buff brick and Kasota stone trimmings which arose on the outskirts of their town, and the *Moorhead Daily News* described it as "one of the most commodious and beautiful buildings in the northwest." Significant in its architecture were



year curriculum, they would be awarded an Elementary Diploma and be eligible to teach in rural schools. The fourth year of study, or the Elementary Graduate Course, was for those students who had graduated from high school and received training at the Normal for one year. The Advanced Group included those students who had two years of training in addition to the regular high school course. They were then able to teach in the elementary grades of city school systems. Practice teaching was done in a one room country school located three or four miles from the Moorhead Normal. A few prospective teachers would travel out to the school via horse and buggy and spend the day gaining experience in teaching.

The Moorhead Normal graduated its first class in 1890. The class was composed of eight students, two of whom graduated from the high school curriculum and six of whom received their advanced diplomas.

three arches over the main entrance. The Moorhead Normal building, or "Old Main" as it came to be known, consisted of three stories and an interesting attic which provided space for a manual arts workshop and a roost for the Owl fraternity.

Isolated on the howling prairie, without trees or sidewalks, Old Main presented difficulties in accessibility. "On-campus" girls boarded at the building of the Bishop Whipple School, a distance of some seven or eight blocks from the main building, and the distance had to be covered on foot. In the winter, drifts seven or eight feet high had to be plowed through and after the spring thaw, knee-deep mud. When the girls finally reached school, they received their exercise by marching to their recitation classes following daily chapel.

The Normal School course was divided into five years of study, and three types of diplomas were awarded. Non-high school graduates would begin in the "C" class and continue their sub-collegiate work in the "B" and "A" classes. Upon completion of this three-





When the Bishop Whipple School was sold to become the present site of Concordia College, it became necessary to construct a residence for women on the campus. A four-story brick structure was completed in 1893 and was first referred to as the Normal Home. Upon the suggestion of Governor Knute Nelson, it came to be known as Wheeler Hall, in honor of its first preceptress.

Frances G. Wheeler instituted a strict dormitory schedule which existed until 1917. The girls were required to rise at 6:45 a.m. in order to make sure they were through breakfast, chapel, and calisthenics in time for their eight o'clock class. The preceptress regulated all male visits and made sure that every Sunday at 3 p.m. the girls were locked in their rooms to write home to their parents. Dormitory social life was not limited, although rules and regulations were strict.

They only served to make midnight spreads and coffee brewed by candlelight taste more exciting.

Other facilities were deemed necessary, so in 1901 a gymnasium and assembly room were added to Old Main. Then, in 1908, a model school replaced the previous country school for student teaching. Thus the Moorhead Normal, the first school in the state to affiliate with rural schools for the practical application of teacher education, was now the first to establish a laboratory school.

Since the main purpose of the curriculum was to train teachers for elementary schools, a feminine majority dominated the Moorhead Normal campus, and in 1910 a second residence for women,



Comstock Hall, was constructed. More boys were progressively attracted to the Normal School course, however, mainly because it allowed older boys of seventeen or eighteen, who had not had the opportunity to go beyond the eighth grade, to finish high school and the Normal course with associates closer to their own age.

When there were enough men on campus, the school sponsored athletic teams which competed indiscriminately against high school and other normal teams in the area. Under the direction of an Athletic Association, organized in 1898, the sports of football, baseball, and basketball were begun. In baseball, high scores predominated, as in Moorhead Normal 27, Fargo College 4. Before the gymnasium was added to Old Main, both men and women students would walk to the Fargo Y.M.C.A. to play basketball, in preparation for a time when a Women's Intramural team might have to substitute for a lack of men.

Social life also accelerated when there were enough men on the campus. The gramophone was a wonderful invention, making dances popular. Festivals, rhetorical, and the dramatization of a Shakespearian or Classic play, with both students and faculty participating, also contributed to the social life. In 1908 the tragedy *Dido* was presented with Miss Ethel Tainter of the dramatics department in the leading role.





These typical co-eds are no doubt hopefully looking for the rare man on campus in the days when the male population was seriously depleted by World War I. The girls, however, managed to keep themselves busy by organizing seven auxiliary branches of the Moorhead Red Cross on the Normal campus. Through this organization they participated in first aid, home nursing, and sewing classes. The young women were forever knitting for the soldiers, even while attending class. The armistice and an influenza epidemic were the only forces which could halt them. When the flu hit the campus in 1918, Miss Millie Dahl, dormitory director at that time, swiftly turned Comstock and Wheeler Halls into hospitals and applied her Red Cross training to nursing the girls back to health.

The students and faculty also contributed monetarily to the war effort. When the call came from the National Red Cross for funds, the school responded by contributing over \$900. The classes of the war years also financed a tribute which was completed in the early twenties. At the rear of the stage in Weld Hall are three stained glass windows, dedicated to those who served in the First World War from the Moorhead Normal.

Dr. Frank A. Weld served as president of the Moorhead Normal during the war years, having succeeded Livingston Lord in 1899. Dr. Weld had studied under some of the most famous actors of New England in preparation for a career on the stage, and this dramatic training was evident in his presentations as a lecturer and public reader. His area of interest was further apparent in the emphasis he placed on a well established Department of English and the development of a Department of Reading and Expression.



DR. WELD

Under President Weld's promotion, this school had published its first newspaper in 1900, *The Normal Red Letter*. The students of the literary society edited this monthly journalistic venture which was not composed of "on-the-scene" news articles heralded by headlines, but was rather a day by day chronicle of the month's happenings. The *Red Letter* also consisted of articles in editorial form on such topics as the value of good penmanship. After the fifth volume, the *Red Letter* was discontinued, but replaced by a quarterly *College Bulletin*, which became the forerunner of today's *Mistic*. The graduating class of 1916 also contributed to the school's journalistic endeavors with the first school yearbook, *The Praeceptor*.

A chapel choir and orchestra had been well established before the war in accordance with President Weld's wishes. The interest in dramatic productions during the early 1900's also shows Dr. Weld's generating influence towards artistic creativity. Therefore, in 1915, when a building was erected with the original intention of using it solely for music, drama, and art, it was appropriate that it should bear his name. Weld Hall was constructed on part of the additional twelve acres acquired in 1912, and the new building now completed the basic pattern of the circle.



As the century progressed, the increase in the number of established high schools paralleled an increase in the percentage of high school graduates to enroll in the state normal schools. This made normal courses offered on the secondary level no longer necessary. In 1921, the State Normal School Board authorized the elimination of all sub-collegiate courses from the curriculum of the state normal schools and redesignated them as Minnesota State Teachers Colleges. Dr. O. M. Dickerson (1919-1923) was president when the Moorhead Normal thus emerged as Moorhead State Teachers College.

Beginning in September of 1924, the completion of a standard four-year high school course was required for college entrance, and in the following year the state teachers colleges were authorized to provide a four-year program of studies leading to a bachelor's degree in elementary education. It had been the plan of the Minnesota State Teachers College Board to limit these colleges to the preparation of elementary teachers, but the growth of high schools demanded more secondary teachers. Recognizing this need, the board in 1928 further authorized the state teachers colleges to confer the Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education degree.

This advancement in purposes and curriculum seemed, to all observers, to have come to an unfortunate end at M.S.T.C. in 1930. For on a Sunday evening, February 9th, thirty-three years ago, the screams of "fire" electrified the girls' dormi-



DR. DICKERSON

tories. Old Main was burning! The flames, ignited by a short circuit in the main fuse box in the basement, had shot up a wooden ventilating shaft and burst out just under the gabled roof. The danger of shooting sparks igniting the dormitories necessitated their evacuation. Plunged into darkness, the girls hysterically stuffed their most important belongings into whatever container was available and either dragged or dropped it onto the mounting collection on Comstock's porch. Their efforts were needless, however, as the wind carried the sparks out onto Memorial Field.

Thousands of spectators stood in the slush around the summer-hot building, watching the futile efforts of the firemen to hose down the flames. The crowd groaned as the tinder-dry walls caved in with resounding crashes and as the library's 25,000 volumes and the documents of the Registrar's Office crumbled along with them. When it became apparent that any wholesale salvage was impossible, some of the spectators began to

DR. MacLEAN



evacuate materials from the building. In the excitement, however, many strange things were carried out, including two pots of geraniums and a sandtable, carefully moved so as not to disturb the arrangement displayed on it. Fortunately, no lives were lost. Around 4 a.m. the last of the spectators went home, and only three blackened arches remained standing.

With the ruins of Old Main still smoking, the college prepared to make adjustments. At 9 a.m. in a biology lecture room in Weld, President Ray B. MacLean announced to an amazed faculty that classes would resume in one week. That afternoon, at a mass rally in Weld Auditorium, Dr. MacLean and Dr. O. J. Hagen, the Resident Director, assured the student body and townspeople that the fire had not killed school spirit. Senator G. D. McCubrey promised his backing in getting appropriations from the legislature for new buildings. Thus reassured, students who had begun plans for transferring to another school cancelled them.

With the aid of the Alumni Association and the Moorhead community, classes did resume within one week. The Moorhead Armory and the dormitories were adapted for classroom space, and Weld Hall served many purposes. The Alumni Association, helped by Moorhead bankers, purchased six houses to the west of Weld Hall which were used for the training school. That the college was able to sustain its purposes, despite inadequate facilities and a lack of materials, is shown by an enrollment of 538 students in the fall of 1931, the highest up to that time in the school's history.

One morning in chapel, the students initiated a fund for a Student Exchange building. The result was a white frame structure located next to Weld Hall. At first the Student Exchange was used as a temporary gymnasium, band room, and



location for college parties. A few years later it became a dormitory for men. During the Second World War it made its final conversion

into an army barbershop and a storage bin for onions. "Mildew Hall," as it was called, was razed in 1945.

In unusually swift action, the 1931 State Legislature appropriated \$800,000 for the construction of four new buildings on the M.S.T.C. campus: a three-story main building, a heating plant, a physical education building, and a laboratory school. The sounds of construction buzzed through the classrooms that fall and talk of the new buildings dominated campus conversation until they were dedicated in June of 1932. The students and faculty voted to name the new main building in honor of their president, Ray B. MacLean. Built on the site of Old Main, MacLean Hall symbolized his tireless efforts to keep the college in operation after the disaster.

With the completion of MacLean Hall and its complements, the faith which had sustained confidence in the school through two difficult years now burst into a tremendous school spirit. The burning of Old Main came to be known as the birth of the greater Moorhead State Teachers College.



"Dragons!"—the epithet first applied to the football team, typified the entire school spirit and exemplified itself in the "burning of the 'M.'" The school's athletic teams had previously been called "Peds." (Originally an abbreviation for pedagogues, in the '30's it denoted corn plasters.) Miss Flora Frick, physical education instructor, had suggested the new name "Dragons" in 1930, after seeing the team roar out onto the field from their transitory "hole-in-the-ground" dressing room.

In addition to the birth of Denny Dragon, the college adopted another symbol, the official seal. The three arches of Old Main are commemorated in the design and upon them are inscribed the words used on the stained glass windows, "Sacrifice, Service, and Loyalty."





One lonesome day in 1941, the North Coast Central Limited pulled out of the station with the first half of M.S.T.C.'s men aboard. With Coach Alex Nemzek at the head, they were destined for a California army training camp and World War II. The co-eds were once again left to run the campus, holding all the class offices and dominating Who's Who. The *Mistic's* pages were filled with war news: "Killed in Action," "Following the Boys," and "In Memoriam." A diminutive 1944 *Dragon* was dedicated as "A Letter to Joe."

The vacuum which the departure of the boys had created was filled, however, when President O. W. Snarr announced at a faculty meeting that the college would participate in the training program of the 346th Army Air Force division. This college training detachment remained on campus from March, 1943, to June, 1944,

and during that time 1,650 aircrew men were trained. Twenty-one of the regular faculty members also helped to administer the program.

The invasion of so many men on the campus produced quite a change in atmosphere. The men were housed in Wheeler and Comstock Halls, the sorority and fraternity rooms, and the present Student Commission room, and the girls were left to find rooming places in Moorehead homes. Even though they were not residing on campus, the roll of drums woke them every morning at 5:30.

After the war, Dr. Snarr promoted the re-establishment of a strong academic program. The college was organized into divisions, and general education courses were introduced into the first two years of the college curriculum. M.S.T.C. was received into membership in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Most significant, at this time, was the fact that the college once again expanded its purposes. There was a demand to provide higher education for the increasing number of young people not seeking a teaching degree. In 1946, therefore, the college was authorized by the Minnesota State Teachers College Board to establish a program of studies leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree.

The first dormitory to be established expressly for men, with the exception of "Mildrew Hall," was erected in 1949. It was named in honor of Caswell A. Ballard, the "grand old man of M.S.T.C.," who had been an outstanding science instructor for 38 years. MacLean Hall was remodeled to provide a student center, when Dr. Snarr grew tired of seeing the *Mistic* office littered with coke bottles.

In 1953, the college was given approval for the addition of a graduate program leading to a Master of Science Degree in Education. M.S.T.C. was not only adapting its curriculum to the latest teaching methods, but also providing teachers with an opportunity for advanced preparation in their field. When Dr. Snarr retired in 1955, having been with M.S.T.C. for fourteen years, the college enrollment was up to 783. Dr. A. L. Knoblauch succeeded him as president.

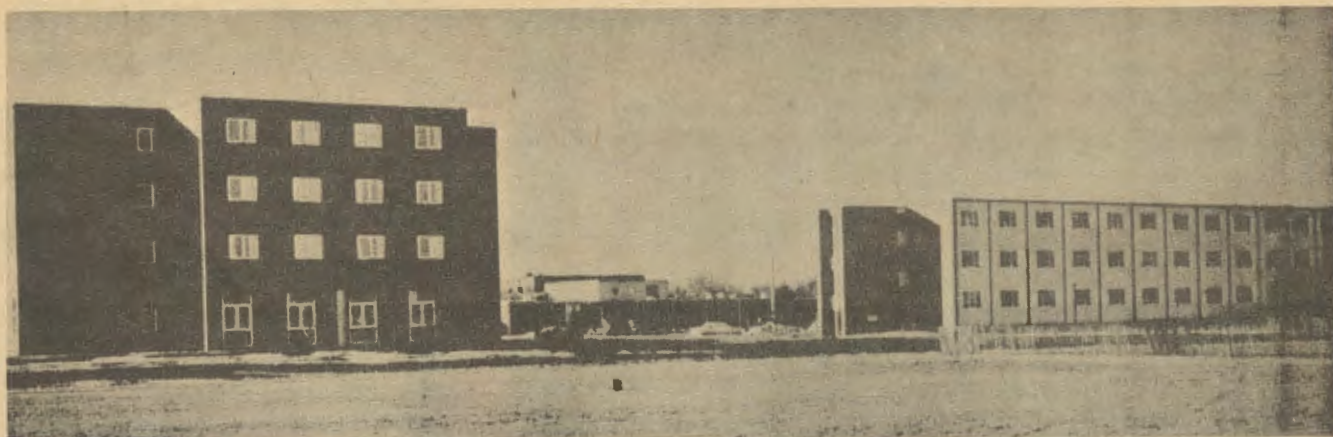


DR. SNARR

DR. KNOBLAUCH







During Dr. Knoblauch's three year administration, the present building expansion program was given its impetus. The Weld Hall Addition was completed in 1957 and Dahl Hall in 1958. Appropriations were also obtained from the 1957 State Legislature for the construction of a fieldhouse, stadium, and physical education building, power plant, library and audio-visual center, and for an architect's design of a science and industrial arts building.

Several additions were also made to the academic program. Areas of concentration for elementary majors were established. Majors and minors were made available in psychology and business education. Realizing the need for teachers capable of understanding the handicapped and mentally retarded or superior child, the college instituted a program of special education.

In 1957, Moorhead State Teachers College once again had its name changed. As Moorhead State College, its primary concern was still with the education of teachers, but the name change emphasized its increasing direction towards being a liberal arts college.

This new emphasis on the liberal arts curriculum has dynamically continued under the presidency of Dr. John Neumaier. Ten new majors have been created since 1958. Two new departments, philosophy and speech, have emerged within the past year. In accordance with a strengthening of the curriculum, the faculty has expanded to 114 members, including several international instructors, and the number with earned doctor's degrees is rapidly increasing. Not only did the curriculum warrant an increased faculty, but an enrollment of 2,000 students also created demands.

President Neumaier's tenure has witnessed the exciting expansion of the facilities needed to correspond with a growing student body and broadening purposes. The Livingston Lord Library, the Alex Nemzek Fieldhouse and Stadium, and the Power Plant have all come to fulfillment since 1960. Last spring saw the completion of Hagen Hall, which tremendously boosted the college's science and industrial arts facilities. Built at a cost of \$1,822,000, it is a striking example of the changes which have taken place since \$60,000 was appropriated for Old Main. And then, finally and most recently, Kise Commons, food service and student center, and Snarr Hall, residence for men, were added to the campus landscape in the fall of 1962.

Always striving to promote its educational program and facilities within the college, Moorhead State has also endeavored to extend them to the citizens of the surrounding area. Fine Arts programs, art exhibits, concerts and recitals, adult education classes, consultant services, and institutes, such as the International Institute of Politics conducted on campus this past fall, are representative of the college's role in providing cultural services to the community.

In this year of our Diamond Jubilee, we as students are proud of the achievements of the past. It is exciting to be a part of an expanding institution, and we only hope that our endeavors will continue to increase the stature of Moorhead State College.

COMPILED AND EDITED by Judith Peacock  
and David Seutter

