

The Martin Luther Academy Papers

An Inventory



Archive of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Mequon, Wisconsin

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The Martin Luther Academy Papers

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Collection Level Description

Title: The Martin Luther Academy Papers

Dates: 1957-1996

Extent: 0.7 meters of textual records

Historical sketch:

Martin Luther Academy could trace its roots back to the founding of Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) in 1884. At the time, what would eventually become Martin Luther Academy was known only as the “high school department” of DMLC. What started as six and eventually became eight grades shared the same campus atop the ridge that cut through New Ulm, Minnesota.

In November 1962, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) decided to separate the high school department from the college to create an “academy”, with the express purpose to train young men and women who planned to go on to DMLC to become a Lutheran Elementary School teacher or Northwestern College (NWC) in Watertown, Wisconsin to study to become a pastor. At the same time, the DMLC Board of Control purchased land for a future separate campus only a few blocks from the college. Professor Oscar Siegler was called as the first president of Dr. Martin Luther High School and began his duties on 1 June 1963. The Synod also established a separate Board of Control for the preparatory school, comprising of two teachers, two laymen and three pastors. In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther High School opened its doors as a separate high school from the college on-campus.

Before the 1965 school year, Dr. Martin Luther High School became Martin Luther Academy (MLA), to emphasize the school’s special purpose of sending students on to DMLC or NWC. MLA continued to share the facilities of the New Ulm campus with DMLC, with female students primarily living in Centennial Hall and male students living on the lower floors of Summit Hall. Both student bodies shared the Luther Memorial Union, as well as the classroom and administration buildings on campus. Because MLA shared facilities with DMLC, the preparatory school was able to develop its music and athletics programs, having large percentages of the student body taking part in choir, band and a variety of sports, as well as a number of extracurricular activities such as student publications (The Ram-Page & The Rambler), the Science Club and the Student Council.

As time passed, students from across the country and from as far away as Japan, Africa and Hong Kong enrolled at Martin Luther Academy to prepare for the preaching or teaching ministry. By the 1970s, Martin Luther Academy’s enrollment was increasing in size each school year. This put a great deal of pressure on the campus itself as it became challenging for both MLA & DMLC to co-exist on the same campus. Thus in 1975, a self-study of Martin Luther Academy began to evaluate if it was necessary to move MLA to a separate campus. The possibility of building a completely new school on the land purchased a few blocks from the current campus or elsewhere was considered. At the same time, a plan was developed to amalgamate MLA with Northwestern Lutheran Academy of Mobridge, South Dakota and Northwestern Preparatory School of Watertown, Wisconsin on the same campus as well. This idea soon became prohibitive when the potential price tag was running over twelve million dollars. At the same time the 108-acre campus of Campion Jesuit High School in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin became available at a fraction of its real value. The possibility of purchasing this campus and moving MLA to the site became a very real possibility by June 1978. In a special session of the WELS at that time, the decision was passed to purchase the Campion property to serve as MLA’s new home with the new name, Martin Luther Preparatory School, beginning with the 1979-1980 school year.

In June 1979, Martin Luther Academy, the former high school department of Dr. Martin Luther College, matriculated its final graduating class and closed its doors on the New Ulm campus permanently. 151 students from MLA, with most of the faculty, and Oscar Siegler, continuing as president, as well as sixty students and a handful of professors from the newly-closed Northwestern Lutheran Academy of Mobridge, South Dakota, made the move in the fall of 1979 to their new school home in Prairie du Chien.

More information on the transition from MLA to MLPS can be found in Mark W. Henrich's essay, "How MLA in New Ulm, Minnesota Became MLPS in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin", located at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Mequon, Wisconsin.

Custodial history:

The custodial history of this collection is sketchy at best. Some of the materials in this collection came from the Office of the President (2929 Mayfair Rd., Milwaukee), others have been donated over the years to the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library and the WELS Archives, Mequon, WI. The majority of the collection was donated to the WELS Archives from the Archives of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota in September 2004. It is believed that these materials were accidentally stored at some point in time with the Northwestern College collection, formerly housed at Martin Luther College, and were given to the WELS Archives when the NWC Collection was moved to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Many of these documents came from the files of former MLA Board of Control chairman, Edmund Schulz. Little else is known about the custodial history of the MLA collection

Scope and Content:

The collection is made up of materials produced by or about Martin Luther Academy since 1958. The collection reflects the life of a vibrant, growing college preparatory school established for the purpose of feeding students to the worker training colleges of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This collection reflects the joys and challenges that came with the co-existence of two growing student bodies on the same campus, as well as the struggle that Martin Luther Academy faced to establish its own identity in the region and in the synod at-large. This collection leaves no doubt that the Lord used it as his instrument for the building up of his kingdom, particularly during the challenging years of the 1960s and 1970s.

The collection consists of the following series:

- Series 1: Documents regarding the DMLHS/MLA Board of Control
- Series 2: DMLHS/MLA catalogs
- Series 3: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA faculty
- Series 4: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA graduating classes
- Series 5: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA music
- Series 6: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA recruitment
- Series 7: Documents regarding DMLSH/MLA worship
- Series 8: Miscellaneous DMLHS/MLA documents
- Series 9: Documents regarding the MLA self-study
- Series 10: Documents regarding MLA sports
- Series 11: *The Ram-Page*
- Series 12: Student and faculty handbooks
- Series 13: *The Rambler*

Source of supplied title: Title based on the provenance of the records.

Arrangement: See appendix A for arrangement of the folders in the boxes.

Restrictions: None.

Accruals: The collection remains open for future accruals.

Series level description

The Martin Luther Academy Papers

Series 1: Documents regarding the DMLHS/MLA Board of Control

Dates: 1963-1979

Extent: 4 folders, 7.2 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of agendas, correspondence, minutes and reports produced by the DMLHS/MLA Board of Control or in the case of the president's reports, produced for the Board of Control. This series also includes correspondence and documents regarding calls issued for the dean of students and other faculty positions. This series offers a great deal of clarity to the historical picture of Martin Luther Academy and its inner workings. This series was added to the collection from the MLPS collection in February 2005.

Series 2: DMLHS/MLA catalogs

Dates: 1967-1979

Extent: 3 folders, 8 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of catalogs sent out to synod congregations and to potential students interested in enrolling at Martin Luther Academy. These catalogs reflect the developments and changes from the time when DMLHS became independent of Dr. Martin Luther College to the time when Martin Luther Academy closed its doors in 1979 to move to Prairie du Chien, WI.

Series 3: Documents regarding the DMLHS/MLA Faculty

Dates: 1965-1978

Extent: 3 folders, 3.3 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence, photographs, reports, and other documents regarding the faculty of DMLHS and MLA. This series includes documents regarding faculty orientation, the reviews of faculty service, divine calls to MLA, faculty property and other faculty topics. This series was added to the collection from the MLPS collection in March 2005.

Series 4: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA Graduating Classes

Dates: 1965-1996

Extent: 1 folder, 1.2 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of newspaper articles displaying photographs of the MLA graduates in the *New Ulm Journal*. This series also includes booklets compiled for class reunions that took place in the years that followed the closing of Martin Luther Academy in 1979.

Series 5: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA Music

Dates: 1958-1979

Extent: 1 folder, 2.1 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of programs, newspaper articles and other documents regarding various band concerts, choral concerts and June Nights conducted by the choirs and bands of Martin Luther Academy, as well as joint concerts with the choral and band group of Dr. Martin Luther College or other Area Lutheran High Schools. This series also includes call documents when various music instructors were called to MLA.

Series 6: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA Recruitment

Dates: 1965-1979

Extent: 1 folder, 1.1 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of brochures, correspondence, Ram-O-Grams, photographs and other materials used to recruit grade school students to enroll at DMLHS or MLA.

Series 7: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA Worship

Dates: 1965-1979

Extent: 1 folder, 0.5 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of bulletins from nearly fifteen years of opening services, commencement exercises, faculty anniversaries and other worship services held at MLA. This series also includes the 1978 final opening service sermon preached at Martin Luther Academy.

Series 8: Miscellaneous DMLHS/MLA documents

Dates: 1957-1979

Extent: 1 folder, 2.8 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence, newspaper articles, class rosters, special event programs, class and student council minutes, and presentation materials on a variety of topics and events that took place under the auspices of Martin Luther Academy.

Series 9: Documents regarding the MLA Self-Study

Dates: 1970-1978

Extent: 3 folders, 5.4 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of correspondence, surveys and reports produced during the decade leading up to the synod's decision to move MLA to the Prairie du Chien campus. These documents reflect the strong desire and need to move the academy off of the DMLC campus and relocate to a new campus either locally or somewhere in the Midwest. This series also includes the 1975 MLA Self-Evaluation Report assembled by the faculty of MLA. The information contained in these documents played a major role in the decision to amalgamate Martin Luther Academy with Northwestern Lutheran Academy of Mobridge, South Dakota as Martin Luther Preparatory School in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin in the fall of 1979.

Series 10: Documents regarding MLA Sports

Dates: 1973-1979

Extent: 1 folder, 2.0 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of documents from the founding of the MLA Athletic Boosters, as well as newspaper articles and photographs from the last three school years of Martin Luther Academy. These documents reflect the relative success that MLA's athletic teams met with during these latter years of the school, a success which had not been evident in years prior to this time.

Series 11: The Ram-Page

Dates: 1965-1979

Extent: 4 folders, 8.7 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of nearly a complete set of issues of the student newspaper – “The Ram-Page” – prepared by students of Dr. Martin Luther High School and its successor, Martin Luther Academy.

Series 12: Student and Faculty handbooks

Dates: 1967-1977

Extent: 1 folder, 1 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of guides and handbooks providing policy, guidelines and rules for faculty and students of DMLHS/MLA.

Series 13: The Rambler

Dates: 1968-1978

Extent: 26.8 cm. of textual records

Scope and Content: This series consists of a decade of yearbooks produced by Martin Luther Academy. This series reflects the developments on the shared campus with Dr. Martin Luther College at New Ulm, as well as the developments in MLA as in independent WELS synodical school.

Appendix A

The Martin Luther Academy Papers

Arrangement

Box 1: Folders 1-24

Box 2: Yearbooks 1968-1973

Box 3: Yearbooks 1974-1978

Series 1: Documents regarding the DMLHS/MLA Board of Control
Folders 1-4

Series 2: DMLHS/MLA catalogs
Folders 5-7

Series 3: Documents regarding the DMLHS/MLA faculty
Folders 8-10

Series 4: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA graduating classes
Folder 11

Series 5: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA music
Folder 12

Series 6: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA recruitment
Folder 13

Series 7: Documents regarding DMLHS/MLA worship
Folder 14

Series 8: Miscellaneous MLA documents
Folder 15

Series 9: Documents regarding the MLA self-study
Folders 16-18

Series 10: Documents regarding MLA sports
Folder 19

Series 11: *The Ram-Page*
Folders 20-23

Series 12: Student and faculty handbooks
Folders 24

Series 13: *The Rambler*