



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

A HISTORY
1850-1975

Harold F. Williamson
and Payson S. Wild

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NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

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This history is dedicated to

DR. J. ROSCOE MILLER

Chancellor Emeritus
Northwestern University

PREFACE

This illustrated volume traces the 125-year history of Northwestern University's evolution from a small traditional liberal arts college into a major university of national stature. Given the limitation imposed by space, it was clearly impossible to identify the successive generations of faculty members whose talents and devotion as teachers and scholars served to fulfill the high purpose the founders set for the university. Nor was it possible to give more than a general account of the major curricular developments in the individual schools over this long period. Our primary objective has been to focus on what seemed to be the most significant features of Northwestern's history: the goals and vision of the founders; the role of trustees and friends in providing the financial support essential for survival and expansion; the growth in the endowment and physical facilities and the changing patterns of income and expenditure; the proliferation of associated professional schools; the development of two campuses—Evanston and Chicago; and the emergence of an academically integrated university.

The arrangement of the book into four sections is chronological. Section one, "Visions and Struggles," describes Northwestern's founding and survival in the face of the Civil War and recurring booms and depressions up to 1890. The second section, "A University for the Modern Age," deals with the university's expansion and adaptation to the needs of a changing society up to 1920. Section three, "Toward a Greater Northwestern," carries the account forward through the boom years of the 1920's, the depression of the 1930's, and the impact of World War II and its aftermath on the university. The final section, "A University of the Highest Grade," relates the development of Northwestern's physical and academic capabilities in the economically and intellectually supportive climate of the post-Sputnik era and the university's response to the student unrest of the late 1960's and early 1970's.

Credit for the establishment of the history project must be given to Chancellor Emeritus J. Roscoe Miller who, a year prior to his retirement, decided that an up-to-

date history of Northwestern was greatly needed, and appointed John E. Fields, vice president for development, to be “publisher,” with duties commencing with the engagement of the writers and ending with the publication and distribution of the book.

Only four published accounts dealing with the university’s past were available: *Northwestern University: A History, 1855-1905*, a four volume collection of essays edited by Arthur Wilde, published in 1905; a one volume survey by Robert D. Sheppard and Harvey B. Hurd which came out in 1906; Estelle Ward’s popular and somewhat impressionistic work, *The Story of Northwestern University*, published in 1924; and *A Pictorial History of Northwestern University, 1851-1951*, edited by Franklin D. Scott for Northwestern’s Centennial celebration in 1951.

Initially the authors’ plan was to concentrate on the history of Northwestern since 1939, but once the project was under way it became apparent that recent decades could not be properly treated or understood without an account of what had happened in earlier years. Accordingly, it was decided that the history should encompass the life of the university from its inception until 1975.

The authors are most grateful to the many individuals who assisted in the preparation of this history. We are particularly indebted to our associates Gail Casterline, Timothy G. Walch, and Helen C. Lee for their research assistance and substantive contributions to the manuscript.

Fannia Weingartner, as editor, contributed immeasurably to the organization and readability of the final product. Her skill in bringing the manuscript into consistent form proved to be invaluable. She also served as project coordinator under Vice President Fields.

We are deeply indebted to University Archivist Patrick M. Quinn, with whom we worked closely throughout the history project. Without his knowledge of the holdings of the archives and the assistance given by him and his staff members—Katherine H. Giese, Mary S. Moss, and Sarah L. Good—in making these records available, our task would have been infinitely more difficult. Ms. Moss also assumed major responsibility in finding illustrations for the first three parts of the history.

No meaningful discussion of the university’s finances would have been possible without John Cerva’s careful synthesis and analysis of the various types of reports submitted by the Northwestern treasurers over the years. The Index is the work of Elizabeth Garber.

University Relations staff members involved in the production of the book include: Jack O’Dowd, director; Mary Buzard, publications manager; Eulalee Birchmeier, production coordinator; Mirjana Hervoic, who was responsible for the book’s graphic design and layout; William S. Ricker, who did final proofing; Gregory W. Casserly and Marylou Sanders, who contributed special promotional material; and Lee Kovacevics, who assisted in researching illustrations for the last part of the history.

Others who gave generously of their time and counsel include: Leslie B. Arey, Harold H. Anderson, James E. Avery, Robert H. Baker, Leon A. Bosch, Peter Byrne, Doris Corbett, Mikell C. Darling of the Evanston Historical Society,

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And to the many Northwestern alumni, whose pride and interest in their alma mater prompted them to share with us cherished personal photographs and memories of their college days, we are truly grateful.

Harold F. Williamson
Payson S. Wild

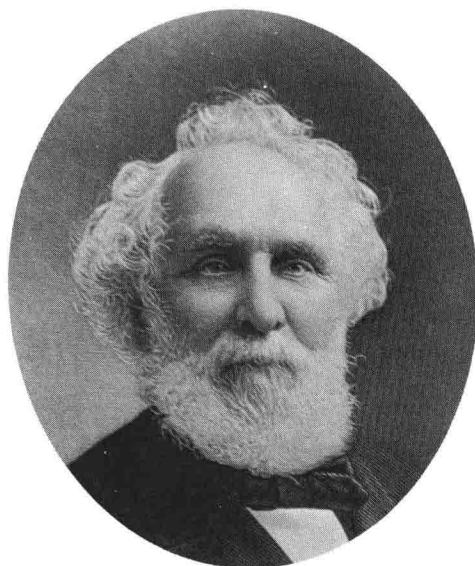
Part One

VISIONS AND STRUGGLES

1850—1890



Founder Grant Goodrich, active in law and church work



Founder Orrington Lunt, merchant engaged in politics and philanthropy

Old College, the university's first building, completed in 1855



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1

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

1850—1876

When the founders of Northwestern University decided in 1850 to establish an institution of higher learning, their aim was to serve the people of the original Northwest Territory. Created by act of Congress in 1787, this included the area from which the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota were later carved. The geographic scope of their venture supplied the name which the university carries to this day, even though its students now come from all fifty states and numerous foreign countries as well.

When the early pioneers pushed westward they settled first in the river valleys, so that when Illinois entered the Union in 1818 its population was concentrated at its southern tip and in towns along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. What is now Chicago was a remote, muddy settlement surrounding a military fort. Within the next three decades its location along the southern shore of Lake Michigan led to the transformation of this settlement into a bustling mercantile center of nearly 30,000. By 1850 Chicago had become the focus of a cluster of important economic activities including meat packing, grain trading, shipping, railroading, and the production of farm implements.¹

William B. Ogden, Chicago's first mayor, seemed to speak for both his city and its people when he boasted, "at fourteen I fancied I could do anything I turned my hand to, and that nothing was impossible, and ever since . . . I have been trying to prove it, and with some success."² In this spirit of optimism, Chicagoans set about providing their city with such cultural amenities as schools, churches, and newspapers. But the capstone on progress was still lacking, for no sizeable community considered itself complete unless it could boast academies, colleges, and a university.

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the founding of hundreds of colleges in the United States since the federal laissez faire attitude toward education empowered the individual states to grant college charters at will. As a result, America became a land of many small colleges rather than of a few centralized national institutions of the kind traditional in most European countries. By 1860 over 800

colleges had been founded although only about 180 of these had succeeded in gaining a permanent foothold.³ What prompted this feverish proliferation? One reason was that in the 1800's transportation was expensive and time-consuming, particularly in the West, so that it was both more efficient and more economical to provide education close to home. That one's children—especially males—should be educated was part of the democratic creed; there was nothing particularly exclusive about these numerous small colleges. In 1850, Henry Tappan, a future president of the University of Michigan, observed, "... we have multiplied colleges so as to place them at every man's door."⁴

By 1840 Illinois had twelve colleges. Though some were short-lived and little better than high schools, others—like McKendree in the southern part of the state, Illinois College at Jacksonville, and Knox College at Galesburg—were institutions of collegiate rank. Adjacent areas also had their colleges: Indiana Asbury (later DePauw), which opened at Greencastle in 1837; the University of Michigan, chartered the same year; the University of Wisconsin, chartered in 1848; and Beloit and Lawrence in southern and eastern Wisconsin, chartered in 1846 and 1847. Yet Chicago and northeastern Illinois had no degree-granting institution at all.⁵

Organizing a University for the Northwest Territory

At this point the needs of a prosperous and flourishing city attracted the concern of a group of men inspired by a combination of civic and religious zeal. Most of the American colleges of this period owed their existence primarily to denominational enterprise, the Presbyterians and Congregationalists being the most active in sponsoring academies and colleges up to the 1830's and the Methodists joining them thereafter. The Methodist General Conference at this time decided to subsidize colleges, both to raise the quality of ministerial training and to discourage its young people from attending schools controlled by rival denominations. Between 1830 and 1860, the Methodist Church and associated lay groups founded thirty-four permanent schools of higher learning.⁶ Of these, Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut, was the oldest and best known.

As elsewhere, Methodist fervor enlivened the religious life of Chicago where, from 1848 to 1870, Methodists outnumbered all other Protestant denominations.⁷ The leading Methodist congregation in the city was the Old Clark Street Church which counted many prosperous, accomplished, and public-spirited citizens among its communicants.⁸ It is therefore not at all astonishing to find that it was members of this congregation who took the initiative in founding a university to make higher education available to the Methodist youth of the Northwest.

The Founders' Meeting of May 1850

On May 31, 1850, nine men gathered in a law office over a hardware store at Lake and Dearborn streets in Chicago. Young, devout, and energetic, they included a physician, John Evans; three lawyers, Grant Goodrich, Henry W. Clark, and Andrew J. Brown; two businessmen, Orrington Lunt and Jabez Botsford; and three clergymen, Richard Haney, Richard H. Blanchard, and Zadoc Hall.⁹ Evans, Goodrich, Clark, Lunt, and Botsford were members of the Old Clark Street Church, where Haney was pastor. Blanchard and Hall served the city's other two Methodist churches, the Canal Street Church and the Indiana Street Chapel. Goodrich lent

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his office for the meeting; Botsford owned the hardware store in which it was located. Several of the group had studied at seminaries; others had learned their trades through apprenticeship. John Evans was the only one who had attended college.¹⁰

At this first meeting the men knelt in prayer to ask for guidance and blessing, and then resolved that “. . . the interests of *sanctified* learning required the immediate establishment of a University in the northwest, under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” A committee was appointed to prepare a draft of a charter of incorporation. Though committed to the establishment of a Methodist institution, the founders determined at the outset that this would be a lay undertaking with a private endowment. They were very clear about the economic benefits to be derived. According to John Evans’s estimate, “It would cost at least a thousand dollars less for each son we may educate in the proposed university than to send him to Yale or Cambridge.”¹¹ Thus the founders expected to solicit support from many sources and not merely from the Methodist Church. Some of the founders were experienced and avid promoters to whom the nurture of a university promised an outlet for a creative and benevolent use of their talents and energy. One of Evans’s biographers recognized that “On a grand scale Northwestern was one of those children of the heart that men call hobbies.”¹² Three of the original sponsors—Evans, Lunt, and Goodrich—played especially important roles in the subsequent history of the university.

The most prominent of these was John Evans, from whom the future university community would take its name. Born in 1814, Evans was the oldest son of a Waynesville, Ohio, merchant and entrepreneur. He studied at Lynn Medical College in Cincinnati, from which he was graduated in 1838. After getting married, Evans set up his practice in Attica, Indiana, and soon became active in state politics. He worked for the establishment of a state asylum for the insane in Indianapolis and then served as its superintendent from 1845 to 1848. It was there that he became familiar with many aspects of institutional management. During the same three years, Evans held a professorship at Rush Medical College in Chicago, to which city he moved in 1848. Here he achieved professional eminence as the editor of a medical journal, as the inventor of a surgical aid, and as a researcher on cholera. He also helped organize the Chicago and Illinois Medical societies.

John Evans

As a diversion from his professional pursuits, Evans relished speculating in land and acquired a considerable fortune, first in real estate and later as a railroad builder. In 1853 and 1854 he served as city alderman. Eventually his business and political activities took up so much of his time that in 1857 he gave up his medical practice altogether. In 1864, when President Lincoln appointed him governor of the Colorado Territory, he moved to Denver where he spent the rest of his life and helped found the University of Denver. Even then John Evans continued to devote time, energy, and money to Northwestern, serving as chairman of the board until his death in 1897.¹³

Born in 1815 in Bowdoinham, Maine, Orrington Lunt received little formal education and started to work in his father’s store at the age of fourteen. Ambition

Orrington Lunt

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drove the young storekeeper West in 1842 to the boom town of Chicago, where he began a new career as a commission merchant to the grain trade. Lulled into excessive confidence by initial success, "he bought boldly and lost in a single season all that he made," a friend later recalled, adding, "He took the lesson to heart. He never speculated again, and was afterward noted for his cautious and conservative sagacity."¹⁴

In 1853 Lunt retired and thereafter channeled his efforts and resources entirely into political and philanthropic causes. During the 1850's he was a committee member of the Board of Trade; a Chicago Water Commissioner; a director of the Chicago and North Western Railway Company; a founder of the Chicago Orphan Asylum; a director of the Homeopathic Hospital; and a trustee of the Dearborn Observatory. He also subsidized the Quinn Chapel, a Methodist church for Chicago blacks.

Grant Goodrich

The third major founder was Grant Goodrich. Born in Milton, New York, in 1812, he had been educated at an academy and trained in a law office in Westfield, New York. At the age of twenty-two, he moved to Chicago where he opened a real estate and law office.¹⁵ Goodrich was an active temperance crusader and helped plan the Washingtonian Home of Chicago for Alcoholics. He also organized public schools. From 1859 to 1864 he was a Judge of the Superior Court of Chicago. Through his legal practice he became acquainted with Abraham Lincoln whose policies he later supported.

Of the laymen among the founders, Goodrich was the most involved in church work, organizing the city's first Bible society and serving as vice president of the American Bible Society.¹⁶ Goodrich also helped found the Garrett Biblical Institute in 1853. Through his efforts, the First Methodist Church acquired its valuable tract at Clark and Washington streets in Chicago.¹⁷ Given Goodrich's devotion to the church it was to be expected that he would urge that Northwestern be established as a Methodist institution.

The remaining founders were also newcomers to Illinois, having moved to Chicago in search of new opportunities. Botsford, for example, started a hardware store and gradually expanded his business to include wholesale as well as retail operations. He was a city councilman and, with Lunt, an organizer of the Chicago Orphan Asylum. Brown and Clark became successful attorneys, while Blanchard, Haney, and Hall served the Methodist Church in various capacities throughout Illinois.¹⁸

*The Search
for Support*

The group appointed to prepare the charter was also directed to ask the regional Methodist conferences to share in the "government and patronage" of the university. Another committee, composed of Haney, Blanchard, and Evans, was appointed to solicit funds for the construction and endowment of the university. Over the summer, this committee found that about \$25,000 could be raised locally, including pledges from the founders.* Lunt and Evans made the first subscription

*The first entry in the university ledger, dated September 22, 1853, itemizes subscriptions totaling \$20,000. These pledges could be paid in installments over three years, which perhaps explains why the trustees initially had no money to work with.

First Ledger of the University, July 1853-June 1859, Book I, N.U. Business Office, N.U.A.

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to Northwestern, each for \$5,000. By the trustees' meeting of June 14, the charter committee had prepared the Act of Incorporation which designated the school as "The North Western University."*

Six Methodist conferences were sent notices on behalf of Northwestern: Rock River, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois. The notice, known as a memorial, did not explicitly request funds but asked each conference to choose four representatives to serve on the university's board of trustees, making explicit the founders' goal of establishing a regional, rather than a local university. The founders pointed out that because of the extensive nature of their proposed university, "but one such institution can . . . be sustained in a large district of country under the patronage of our denomination." Chicago was an appropriate place for this institution, said the letter, for the locale was "favourable for securing the means of endowment and support" and "for receiving extensive patronage." The memorial went on to spell out the founders' commitment to high educational standards in a religious atmosphere. It expressed their conviction that "the regenerate heart must be accompanied and directed by an enlightened intellect to give man the full image of his Maker." The founders foresaw Northwestern as fostering all branches of learning, particularly those preparing students for "the practical duties of life" in chosen vocations. "Our church ought to have plenty of laborers," stated the memorial, pointing out that individuals needed training to assume a useful place in society.¹⁹ The conferences responded by electing the designated number of trustees.

During the first session of the Seventeenth General Assembly, the Illinois state legislature approved Northwestern's Act of Incorporation, which was signed into law by Governor Augustus C. French on January 28, 1851.²⁰ Under the terms of the charter, a self-perpetuating board of thirty-six trustees was granted the power to administer the university's business affairs, organize a faculty, adopt by-laws and grant degrees. A provision reflecting the strong religious sentiments of the founders stated that twenty-four trustees were to be appointed by the various Methodist Episcopal conferences in the Old Northwest. However, no particular religious faith was required of students or faculty. The 1851 charter also stipulated that the university should not, except on a temporary basis, hold more than 2,000 acres of land.[†]

*Incorporation,
January 28,
1851*

In February of 1855, an act to amend the charter was introduced into the legislature. Like the original charter, section 2 of this act expressed the founders' Methodist convictions. It prohibited the sale under license or otherwise of any "spiritous, vinous or fermented liquors within four miles of the location of the said university." Because temperance was already a local political issue by the 1850's, the introduction of this amendment initiated a heated debate between the wets and

*Prohibition
Amendment
of 1855*

*This title appeared in the university's records and publications until February 1863, when "North" and "Western" were combined to form a single word in the university *Catalogue*. Thereafter, this became the official title of the university, though the earlier spelling continued to appear in newspapers and magazines for many years.

† The university's peak holdings of land in Illinois came between 1854 and 1867 when approximately 680 acres were acquired. As of October 1974, the total owned was 325 acres—249 in Evanston, 45 in Chicago, and 31 in other parts of the state. Of this total all but 69 acres were devoted directly or indirectly to educational and related uses.

drys of the state legislature. By way of compromise, the amendment was approved, provided that "so much of this act as relates to the sales of intoxicating liquor within four miles of the said university may be repealed by the general assembly whenever they think proper." However, the establishment of a "four mile limit" within which liquor was prohibited made Evanston a choice haven for temperance advocates for the next hundred years.

Highly important was section 4 of the 1855 amendment, which stated that "all property of whatever kind and description belonging to or owned by the said corporation shall forever be free from taxation for any and all purposes."²¹ McKendree College enjoyed a similar exemption, as did several colleges founded subsequently, including Monmouth College, chartered in 1853, and Lake Forest University (formerly Lind) and the original University of Chicago, both chartered in 1857.²² The granting of tax exemptions was as far as the state legislature was willing to go to support private institutions of higher learning. But this indirect help proved crucial to their survival.

By spring 1851 the requisite number of trustees had been recruited and on June 14, the board convened at the Old Clark Street Church. The first order of business was the appointment of John Evans as president of the board. The trustees then chose an executive committee, including Evans, Goodrich, and Brown to suggest a plan of operation for the university, to develop a faculty, and to find a president. As a first step the board decided to organize a preparatory school which would ready students for the proposed university. Apparently the board feared that the existing secondary schools in the area were inadequate for that purpose. Evans and Lunt were assigned the task of finding a suitable site.

*Purchase of
the La Salle
St. Property*

According to Evans, immediately after this first meeting of the board he was approached by P. F. W. Peck, one of Chicago's leading real estate dealers and offered land at the corner of La Salle and Jackson streets.* Although Evans warned Peck that "we haven't a red cent," he then went out and "raised a subscription of two thousand dollars, which was the first payment on sixteen lots. My friends came in liberally and we raised the money."²³ The contract for the sixteen lots was signed in September 1852, and the balance of \$6,000 scheduled to be paid off during the following three years.²⁴

Even though a site was now available the trustees could not proceed further with the preparatory school, let alone the university, because they lacked money. By June 23, 1853, however, the executive committee was ready with a plan to raise \$200,000, half by donations and half by the sale of perpetual scholarships. The latter was a common device for raising money in the pre-Civil War period and offered the double advantage of providing a source of income and a ready-made student body. ²⁵ The terms suggested by the executive committee were highly attractive—for \$100 a perpetual scholarship would entitle three generations (the purchaser, his son, and his grandson) to free tuition.

*President
Hinman*

At the same meeting the trustees took the very important step of appointing one of their number, Clark T. Hinman, a Michigan Conference representative, as the

*This property is still owned by Northwestern which leases it to the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company as a site for its headquarters building.