

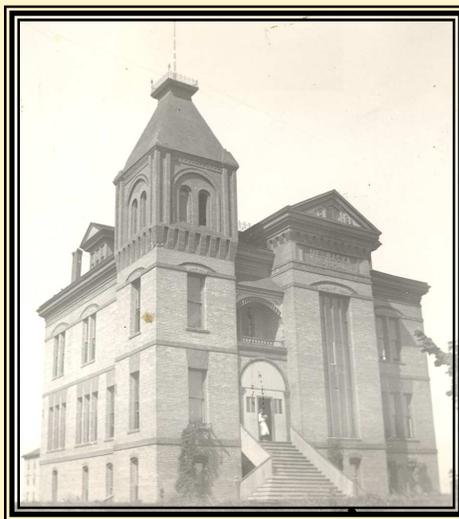
# Archival Minute

March 2011

## A TALE OF TWO BUILDINGS: BRANDENBURG EDUCATION BUILDING HISTORY

When the State Normal School of Wayne opened in September 1910 there were six dormitories (one with a dining hall), a heating plant, a house for the president, and two academic buildings. The older of the two academic buildings, "The College Building" (later "Old College") was constructed in 1892. The building, 51 x 63 feet and four stories high, originally served multiple purposes: classrooms, kitchen, dining room, music rooms, presidential residence, offices, a chapel, library, and science labs. As new buildings were constructed, some of these functions were moved to other buildings, but Old College remained the focus of the campus for several years.

By 1913, however, there was concern about the safety of Old College. A committee appointed by the state senate to visit the normal schools and examine building conditions to plan for appropriations in the next biennium examined the structure. Under a headline, "Original Building Is Dangerous Shell," *The Wayne Herald* of March 20, 1913 quotes from the report:



Old College

*"We found the original building to be wholly unfitted [sic] for the purposes of the normal school, although the crowded condition of the school necessitates its occupancy. . . It was poorly constructed in the first instance, and is now in a bad state of repair, if, indeed, it is not dangerous. Cracks have developed above and below nearly every door and window and the insertion of wooden braces has been deemed necessary to prevent the structure from collapsing. The building consists of a mere shell of brick of a very poor quality. . . The stairwells are of wood, and narrow; the floors are badly worn, and the building is in such condition that the plastering is constantly falling from the walls and ceilings. The rooms cannot be kept warm in severe winter weather. The building is wholly unfit for the purpose for which it is used and should be demolished."*

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The committee went on to note that *“The school is demanding erection of a new structure, which it is planned to make the central building of the plant. If this session of the legislature makes a sufficient appropriation for such a building, the original brick building will be demolished”* and classrooms, administration offices and chapel will be moved to the new building. Furthermore, material from the old building would be used to build an extension to the power plant (now the Studio Arts building).

After recognizing that *“the phenomenal growth of the state’s normal school[s] evidences the fact of the necessity for their existence,”* the committee lamented that the state had not *“pursued a policy more liberal toward its institutions of learning”* in the past and added that the *“only reparation that can be made at this day is for the legislature to provide for the present needs of established schools. It is earnestly recommended that the appropriation at this session be sufficient for the construction of the buildings required by state normal schools. It is not economy—on the contrary, it is the grossest extravagance—to so hamper them for lack of facilities that they cannot utilize to their fullest extent, the investment that has heretofore been made.”*

Funds for the construction of the new building were appropriated. The need for a new building was *“discussed at some length”* State Normal Board meeting in June 1913 according to a story in the June 10, 1913 issue of *The Wayne Herald*. This account states that there was some doubt as to the exact location of the new—should it be built on the exact location of Old College or slightly to the north. President Conn requested formal action be deferred. He is quoted as saying, *“It is my opinion and also the opinion of Mr. Viele, president of the board, that at the next meeting, specifications will be ordered made for the plans which we now have sketched, and that we will be able to let a contract for the new building about the first of September.”*

Preliminary plans were drawn up by President Conn and E.J. Huntemer. Huntemer, who taught manual training at the Wayne Normal, had designed the Library and Science Building (now Humanities) built in 1912. In later years he would also design the Physical-Industrial Building, Niehardt Hall, the Training School (now Hahn), the original wing of Connell Hall and Pile Hall. *The Wayne Herald* in its July 24, 1913 story, “Wayne Normal Gets Central Building” reported that *“Prof. Huntemer was highly commended for the excellence of his work in drawing plans for the proposed new building.”* J. H. Craddock, who was selected as architect for the project, commented, *“No better plans can be made than those already submitted. No architect in the state can improve upon them.”*

The new building was to follow a vision shared by Conn and Huntemer. Buildings were to be *“of one general architectural design. The construction is of dark pressed brick, trimmed with Bedford stone. Red tile or red asbestos shingles [would be] used on all of the buildings. Concrete or terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting and marble stairs feature the construction in all the buildings. The planning was all done with a thought of serving not only the present needs but future growth and development.”* [January 1935 issue of the college *Bulletin*, subtitled “The Building of a School Plant”]

Craddock's plans were submitted and approved in September of 1913 and the board advertized for bids. At its January 13, 1914 meeting, the Board of Education awarded the general contract to J. R. Riddell of Creighton. The winning bid was \$76,630. Thomas Rhinehart's bid of \$4,830 for plumbing and heating was also accepted. A separate bid for electrical wiring was to be taken up at a later meeting. The total cost of the building was expected to be \$90,000. ["Contract for New Normal Building," *The Wayne Herald*, January 15, 1914]

The March 1914 issue of *The Goldenrod* (predecessor to *The Wayne Stater*) carried this news item:

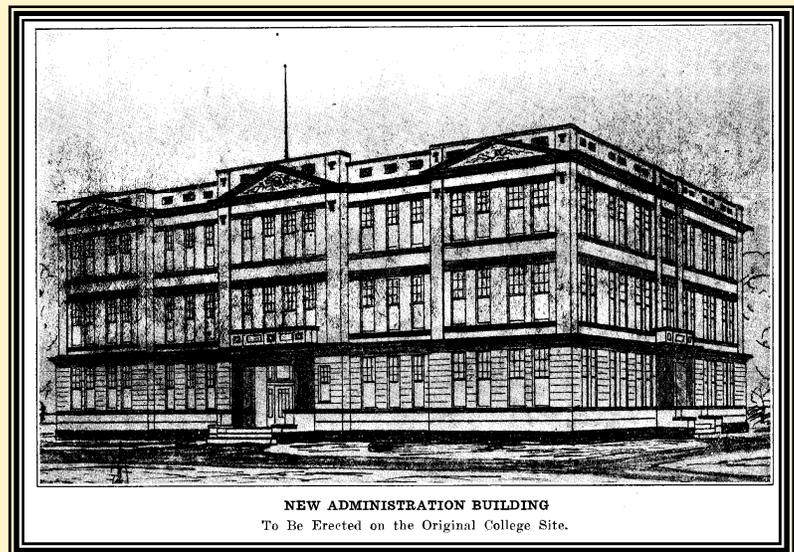
*Upon the present site of the old college structure, soon to be demolished, there will be erected one of the finest school buildings in the state. This will be known as the administration building of the Wayne State Normal School. The half-tone on another page is from a drawing by Professor Huntemer, and shows the run of the building from directly in front of the auditorium steps and near the street. It will be 85x130 feet in dimensions and three full stories high.*

*As one enters the building from the south, to his left will be the offices of the president, board of education, secretary, registrar, large registration room, vault and store rooms. The offices occupy the southwest part of the building, the commercial department the northwest, department of mathematics the northeast, and the departments of art, and history and civics the southeast.*

*On the second floor the entire west half of the building will contain the new auditorium, seating about 850, and having a large stage at the north side. The east half of this floor will be occupied by a large faculty room, and class rooms for elocution, German, Latin and mechanical drawing.*

*On the third floor, the balcony of the auditorium and the upper part of the main chapel room occupy the west half of the building, and the east half contains two large society halls and the departments of stenography, typewriting and music.*

*The exterior will be gray granite and a bluish red brick, with a slate roof. The interior finish will be oak with marble steps and base. The floors will be tile and cement. It will be. . .one of the most modern and substantial school buildings in the state.*



*Administration Building Sketch,  
The Goldenrod, March 1914, p. 11*

Work was to commence on April 1 and completed and ready for occupancy by January 1, 1915.

The razing of the structure that had stood since the establishment of the Nebraska Normal College on College Hill and had served as the focus of education for so many students over two decades was a sad occasion for many. The 1914 college yearbook, *The Spizzerinktum*, noted with sorrow the demise of the “Old” and with hope the coming of the “New”:

*The Passing of the Old Building*

*A quarter of a century is an era in this land of rapid changes. Wayne itself can boast of but a few more years, and in 1890 the little village saw, with pride, arise its first College building—that graceful tower and peaked roof, long window and airy entranceway. For years the approaching traveler would look involuntarily from the train for its picturesque outlines, as a sign of its nearing Wayne. For years citizens proudly pointed to it as “Our College,” an institution made possible by the indomitable energy of one man with a large vision [James M. Pile]. For years children, now mature men and women, looked upon it as a goal, and as an emblem of earnest application. For years its bell aroused the sleepy housewife to the duties of the day and its warning tones formerly also sent children reluctantly to bed. The bell still rings but its tones sound sullen from its humbler quarters.*

*But “all things grow old and change,” and now sacrilegious hands are laid to this aged pile. The old citizen averts his eyes and feels a strange oppression in his breast as bricks and shingles begin to fly. At last the building bows its noble head—a terrible crash—and the worst is over. The old citizen resolutely fixes his gaze and thoughts on other things, and when he looks again the vision has vanished! He rubs his eyes and wonders if he has been dreaming all these years. Ah, no! The Old has passed and the New brings a larger, fairer vision. The old citizen reverently adds his word of praise for the departed and welcomes joyously, though still with a secret twinge, the splendid promise of the future.*



The cornerstone of the new administration building (now Brandenburg Education Building) was laid on Tuesday, June 23, 1914—a day, *The Wayne Herald* remarked, “*long to be remembered by Wayne citizens.*” Indeed there was a celebration to remember on that day. The occasion drew not only citizens of Wayne but also many from surrounding towns and around the state, including members of the state board of education and the presidents of Peru and Chadron State Normals, D. W. Hays and Joseph Sparks, respectively, and the acting president of Kearney State Normal, M. R. Snodgrass. A parade marched up Main Street led by local masons, then members of the Grand lodge, officials and

ladies of the Eastern Star, the band and finally a group of college students. At the college those in charge of the ceremonies, the college choir and the flower girls took their positions on the platform which had been decorated in red, white and blue as well as orange and black (then the school colors).

*The Wayne Herald*, June 25, 1914, gave this description of the ceremony:

*A.H. Viele, president of the board of education, introduced the grand master, Thomas M. Davis, who then proceeded with the exercises of the day, making a few fitting introductory remarks and presenting the grand chaplain, C. C. Wilson of Gothenburg, who read the scripture from Psalm xxiv, and offered prayer.*

*The Normal male quartet then sang in the usual pleasing manner the beautiful sacred selection "Come Unto Me." This was followed by the ritualistic services of the Masonic lodge, with the firing of rockets, the singing of patriotic and sacred selections by the choir, responses by Masons and the raising of the flag over the cornerstone.*

*When the stone had been declared laid by the grand master it was decorated with flowers by fifteen young ladies, and the ceremonies were concluded by the singing of "America" by the audience."*

*The grand master then introduced the orator of the day, C. C. Wilson of Gothenburg, Rev. A. H. Brooks of Hastings, grand orator, being unable to be present.*

*In his discourse on the elements of American civilization, Mr. Wilson enumerated three fundamental bases. The greatest force in natural development he declared to be the home, for no other cornerstone is comparable to a well organized home. Another vital element is the church, for religion and morality teach men to live. Lastly, the school is indispensable, for knowledge in any country is the fundamental basis of human happiness.*

Mr. Wilson concluded his address by extolling freemasonry's stand for these principles. The Grand Master Thomas M. Davis then expressed his thanks to all who attended, to the local Masonic lodge for their hospitality, and to the college officials for the preparations. The ceremony closed with a benediction by Grand Chaplain C. C. Wilson.



The dedication of the new building took place on July 9, 1915, a few months past the expected date of occupancy. The day of the laying of the cornerstone may have been a day to be "*long remembered by Wayne citizens,*" but the day of the dedication was even more memorable. A "*considerable number*" of former students and alumni began to arrive several days ahead of time according to the

July 15, 1915 *Wayne Herald*. The newspaper goes on to say that

*On the morning of the festivities came many more from near-by towns and from greater distances. The people of Wayne and vicinity came in crowds, filling the new auditorium and the halls of the new building and all expressing admiration of the artistic and convenient structure that now crowns Normal Hill.*

A student, Queenie Crahan, wrote in July 1915 issue of *The Goldenrod* (the issue was designated the "Dedication Number"):

*When morning dawned on the long-looked for dedication day the sun was obscured by clouds and a heavy fog shut off the vision of the distant hills. Although the day was dark, spirits were high and faces smiling.*

*Shortly before ten o'clock students and friends gathered in the auditorium, and at ten joyous music echoed along the corridors. Hearty applause encouraged the Normal Orchestra to render several selections from its varied repertoire.*

Dean Henry Hahn then introduced the Stanton Ladies' Quartet. Crahan said that the songs, "Spring," "Bells of Shandon," "Beautiful Ship from Toyland," "Do not Mind the Sorrows, nor the Sighs," and "One Sweetly Solemn Thought" were "thought particularly beautiful." *The Wayne Herald* commented "Seldom do four voices blend so well or singers display such taste and techniques."

President Conn welcomed everyone and, Crahan says, continued with a brief history of the school, "impressing upon those present the fact that the purpose of the institution was, is and shall be, to make men and women more efficient." She adds admiringly that "President Conn always succeeds in winning applause from his students and today both students and visitors joined in uproarious clapping."

Dean Hahn then introduced the first speaker, Superintendent A. O. Thomas, who paid tribute to the memory of President Pile and spoke "glowing words of appreciation" of the work of President Conn, according to *The Wayne Herald*. Crahan adds that Thomas "expressed pleasure at being at Wayne on so happy a day. He encouraged the co-operation of the faculty, students, and the citizens of the community as an aid to a better school, for, he says, 'It is the spirit, not bricks and mortar, which makes the school.'"

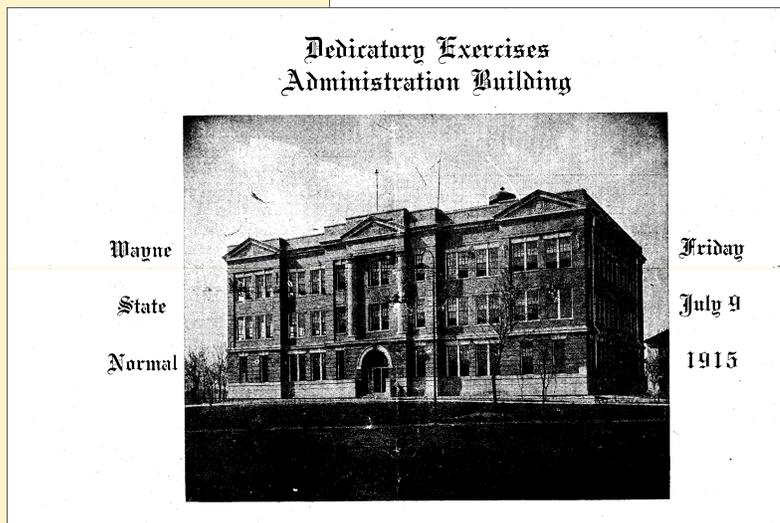
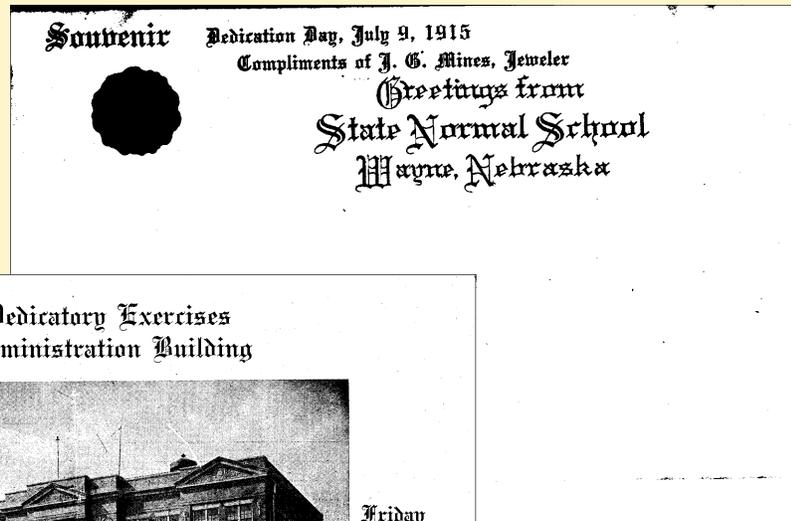
Following another performance by the Stanton Ladies' Quartet, Chancellor Samuel Avery of the University of Nebraska spoke. *The Wayne Herald* gave this account:

*After the friendly words of introduction, Dr. Avery presented an original and substantial argument in justification of the state in the expenditure of money for educational purposes and for such buildings as the one in which he spoke. "The school," he said, "is in large measure*

*the creator of the valuations that we call civilization; it is the place in which the people learn to use the things already created and to demand more. The Yankee schoolmaster made America far more than any other one factor."*

Following more music by the quartet, the crowd sang the Normal School Song composed by Mabel Banks, a 1913 graduate and, as reported in *The Wayne Herald*, "*thereafter the Wayne yell was given with a hearty will.*" It was then announced that "*Dinner is ready*" and from noon until 2:00 all enjoyed a picnic dinner on the grounds of the college.

A departure from the mostly serious morning session, the afternoon took on a carnival atmosphere. It began at 2:00 with President Conn making



*Cover on Program of Dedication Exercise & Administration Building Dedication Postcard*

a few remarks followed by music by the Normal Male Quartet.

Visitors were then able to give brief talks. The student celebration followed. A "Mrs. Sweeney" [no further identification given] writes in *The Goldenrod*

*After the discussion of broad and cultural subjects of the day the students took up the humorous side of the festivities of the dedicatory exercises, showing all the fruits of imagination and genius to the Nth power. The contagious enthusiasm was caught by the audience as the jester heralded the announcements.*

*The program was interspersed with songs, cheers, and yells for good old Wayne, first, last and always.*

*The gala program was expected, as the halls of the new building were decorated with artistic advertising of the afternoon festivities. Colfax County produced the master-pieces in art.*

*Mr. Rogers [a student, Elmer Rogers?], the famous jester, opened the program with a speech. His demonstration and appeal to the imagination were powerful. His gestures and animated facial expressions were equal to Cicero's. We should like to give an oral interpretation, but space forbids, so we refrain.*

Both *The Wayne Herald* and *The Goldenrod* go into detail describing the many performances of the afternoon. Mrs. Rogers describes the first performance (a Spanish dance from Douglas County) as "*the first vaudeville number*". Whether the other acts could be classified as typical of vaudeville is unclear. Wayne County's entry, "Great Knights of Uncle Remus" was apparently a minstrel act.

The acts came from various counties. For example, Knox County gave "Knox Relay" race and drill (a parasol relay race) and Boyd County presented a Fine Arts exhibit (evidently done with some amusement). Performers also came from South Dakota and Iowa.

Later the festivities moved outdoors. Cedar County put on a circus-like program. Burt and Thurston counties produced "The Indian War Dance" and Platte and Stanton counties gave two folk dances entitled "Tantoli" and "The Hungarian Folk Dance."

That concluded the afternoon's activities, but the day was not yet over. *The Wayne Herald* reports that

*By far the largest attendance of the day was at the evening session, at which time, following a formal reception by the faculty, more than one thousand people gathered in the new auditorium to listen to a joint recital by Miss Helen Axe Brown of Chicago and Mrs. Marie Montfort Keckley.*

Miss Brown sang selections from Wagner, Puccini, and Schubert, among others. Mrs. Keckly read selections from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. *The Wayne Herald* gave laudatory reviews of both performers.

So ended a most remarkable day in the history of Wayne State College. Almost 100 years later it's hard to imagine such a grand celebration over a single building. Obviously the faculty, staff and students of the Wayne Normal School as well as the citizens of Wayne and surrounding counties attached great importance to that building. Perhaps this essay entitled "Our Administration Building" from the 1915 *Spizzerinktum* can shed some light on why:

*What does the new Administration building mean to the Normal? What will it mean to the future of our school? These are questions which every loyal student has often considered.*

*A few months ago we saw on our campus piles of brick, lumber and tile, heaps of sand and blocks of marble and stone. Now these have all disappeared and in their place we see the finished structure. Each brick and block of stone, has found its allotted place and fulfilled its purpose. Does this mean that our building is simply an organized collection of brick, lumber and stone? Is it simply a heap of material?*

*Looking at it from another point of view, this edifice existed even before all this material found its way to our campus. Every window, every door, every room and every ornament had received definite place in the blue-prints of the architect. Now each feature exists not only in imagination, but even in reality. For months a busy crowd of workmen have been engaged in bringing to a realization the plan and purpose of the architect. But do we mean no more than the apartments, rooms and hallways when we speak of our new building?*

*Surely it has a deeper, more lasting significance than this. For several years now our president and the men and women at the head of this institution have been planning and dreaming of the time when such a building might be possible. It has required much foresight, labor, and patience on the part of the president to bring his dreams and aspirations to a realization. In it are embodied his hopes, ambitions, and even prayers for the welfare and success of our institution. There have been times when the clouds of disappointment and failure were all too heavy and foreboding, but by patience and perseverance they were driven back and our new building has become an actuality. This building spells growth for the Normal and proves that the Wayne State Normal is a live, progressive institution. It also spells hope for the future and gives a reliable assurance of years of successful service.*

*We also see reflected here the high ideals and ambitions of the people of Northeastern Nebraska in educational lines. There was a time in the history of the state, not so very many years ago, when Nebraska's only educational provision consisted of scattered one-room country schools. Now it demands for its youth, and is willing to provide, the best advantages possible. This building is an indication of the importance Nebraska attaches to the educational training of her sons and daughters.*

*Finally, this building is a lasting monument of the donation of the present generation of the principles of education. For not only will this building serve this generation, but will continue as an inspiration and aid to those who shall follow. Thus this valuable material and equipment, destined to serve its purpose and fall into decay, symbolizes the spiritual struggles and ideals of the present generation and renders possible a noble service to thousands yet unborn.*

Keep these things in mind the next time you pass by or enter Brandenburg.

