



Dr. Ken Kessinger, former coach and professor emeritus of HPER, Dr. Lyn Oyos, professor emeritus of history and Dr. Joyce Nelson, professor emeritus of nursing, reflect on Augustana's early history.

1860 - 1910 Remembering the First 50 Years Celebrating Our Sesquicentennial

Storyed legends of fierce, bearded vikings have weaved in and out of time for hundreds of years.

Of the tales, we can be certain that the iconic viking was adventurous, tenacious and innovative. He used his legendary “long boat” to wage dangerous currents

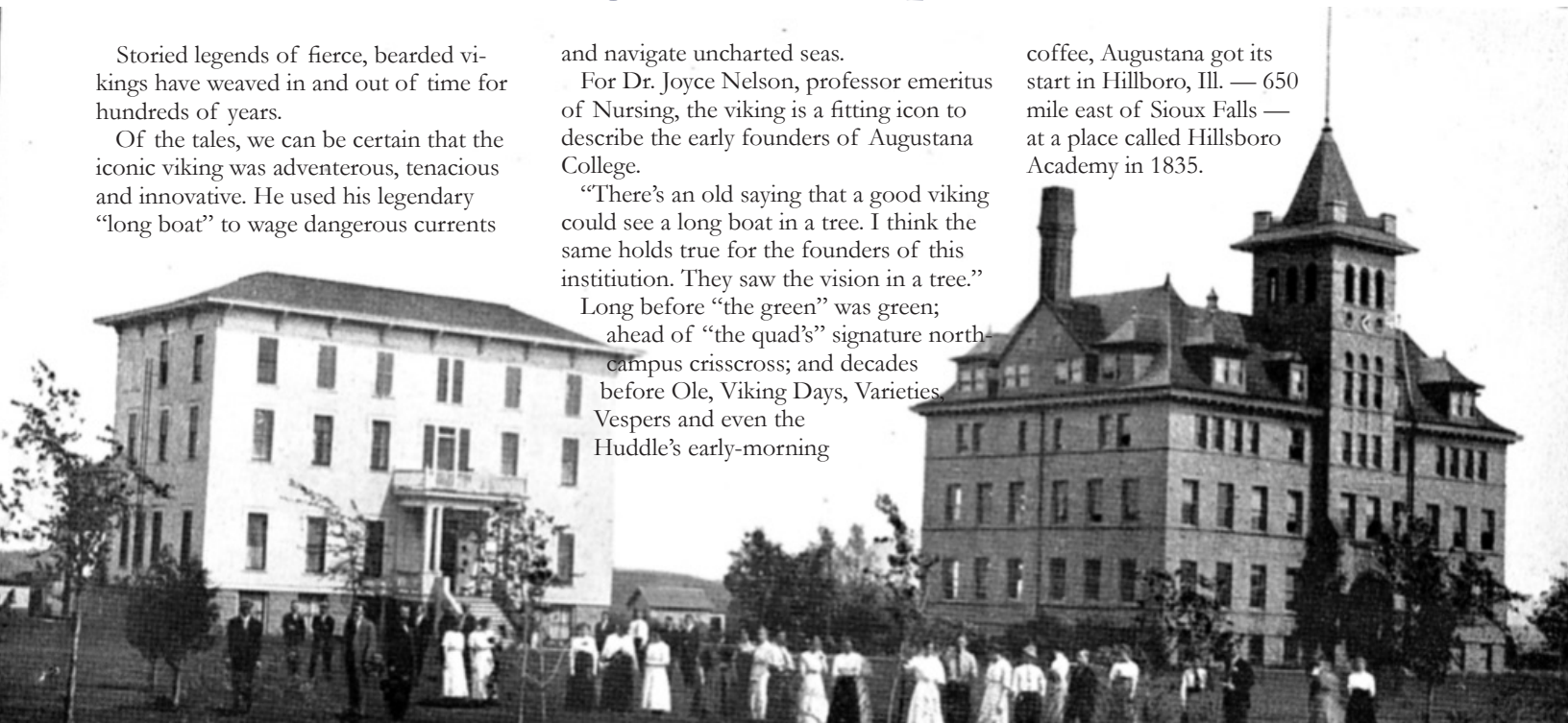
and navigate uncharted seas.

For Dr. Joyce Nelson, professor emeritus of Nursing, the viking is a fitting icon to describe the early founders of Augustana College.

“There’s an old saying that a good viking could see a long boat in a tree. I think the same holds true for the founders of this institution. They saw the vision in a tree.”

Long before “the green” was green; ahead of “the quad’s” signature north-campus crisscross; and decades before Ole, Viking Days, Varieties, Vespers and even the Huddle’s early-morning

coffee, Augustana got its start in Hillboro, Ill. — 650 mile east of Sioux Falls — at a place called Hillsboro Academy in 1835.



Augustana College in Canton, South Dakota. The building on the right was constructed on the east side of the town in 1833. It still stands today as it has been converted to an apartment complex. The building on the left was originally built as a hotel, however its first use was as the College's original home. In 1902, the building was moved to the Augustana campus and re-named Sorum Hall. Visit www.augie.edu/150 to learn more about Augustana's Sesquicentennial.

At the urging of Lutheran Scandinavian leaders, Hillsboro Academy was renamed The Literary and Theological Institute of The Lutheran Church of the Far West in 1846. A short time later, the school moved north, to Springfield, Ill., where it was renamed again — this time as Illinois State University.

The College on Wheels

Nicknamed by historians as “the college on wheels,” Augustana wasn’t done moving yet.

By 1860, the still-young United States was on the brink of political and social catastrophe. Immigration was at an all-time high. In the South, plantation-owned slaves were harvesting 2 billion pounds of cotton each year. At the same time, opposition and public outrage over slavery seethed through towns and villages in the North. In November, Abraham Lincoln was elected president and a month later, South Carolina officially seceded from the union. The first shots of the Civil War soon followed.

In the Midwest, the railroad, industry and farming opportunities drew Norwegian and Swedish immigrants by the thousands — all of whom were looking for a place to settle; somewhere to call home.

For Augustana’s founders, it was time to make a move.

The Augustana Seminary

On June 5, 1860, Norwegian and Swedish church leaders met in Jefferson Prairie, Ill., to form the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod. The controversial move paved the way for Professor Lars Paul Esbjorn and a group of followers to establish a completely new institution — the Augustana Seminary.

Christened in the basement of the Norwegian Lutheran Church on Franklin Street in Chicago, the Seminary’s name was drawn from the Augsburg Confession in 1530, during the time of the Reformation. The document’s Latin designation was the “Confessio Augustana.”

Augustana Seminary held its first class on Sept. 1, 1860 — a founding date shared with Augustana’s sister-college, Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill. Today, the two schools are among the oldest of the 40 colleges and universities affiliated with the Lutheran Church in America.



The Division

By 1863, Rev. Tuve Hasslequist, president of the Augustana Synod, was lobbying for another

move to take advantage of a land offer by the Illinois Central Railroad. Hasslequist also believed that being closer to a rural area populated primarily by Scandinavians, would be in the best interest of the growing school. After a vote, the Seminary moved from Chicago 100 miles southwest, to Paxton, Ill., and Hasslequist became the school’s second president.

Craving their own identity, the Seminary’s Norwegian leaders made the decision to separate from the Swedes. They purchased a building in Marshall, Wis., and in 1869, they formed the Augsburg Seminary and Marshall Academy. That same year, Wisconsin farmer and Norwegian immigrant, Endre Endresen Eidsvaag, gave a bell to the school. A year later, in 1870, the Norwegian Augustana Synod was



Rev. Lars Esbjorn



Rev. Anthony Tuve



founded. In 1875, Augustana Seminary moved from Paxton to Rock Island, Ill., where it has remained since.

Moving West

By the late 1870’s, the nation’s western frontier was bulging. In 1881, leaders of the Norwegian Augustana Synod made the decision to “follow the people” and settled in Beloit, Iowa. While in Beloit, the school reclaimed the name Augustana Seminary and Academy.

In 1890, 26-year old Rev. Anthony Tuve was named president of Augustana. Three years later, amid an economic depression, the church withdrew financial support from the school. Tuve took matters into his own hands and assumed the lease payments himself.

Tuve is, according to Dr. Lin Oyos, professor emeritus of history, among the most legendary figures in Augustana’s history.

“Depression, drought, grasshopper plague — Tuve had to guide the college through all of that.”

In 1884, a group of citizens from Canton, Dakota Territory, a city just across the Big



In 1869, the Norwegian Lutherans parted with their Swedish colleagues at Augustana Seminary in Paxton, Ill., and moved to this school building in Marshall, Wis. Originally built for \$11,000 in 1866, the Norwegians bought it for \$3,700.



A business administration classroom, circa 1910.



The Eidsvaag Bell followed the College to Beloit, Canton, and eventually Sioux Falls. It was removed from Old Main in June 2010 and was rung for the first time in two decades at the Opening Convocation ceremony this fall.

Sioux River, had pooled their money and bought the Naylor Hotel and offered the building to the Augustana Synod with the condition that the school move from Beloit to Canton. The Academy remained in Beloit and the name of the school was changed to Augustana College.

By 1903, the College moved into a permanent home — its first in 43 years — on the east side of Canton, along with the Eidsvaag Bell.

In June 2010, the Bell was removed from Old Main and was rung for the first time in two decades at this fall’s Opening Convocation ceremony.