In the late 1930s, just as Luther College was getting its financial house in order, World War II loomed on the horizon. Many college men volunteered for military service or were drafted when American entered the war in 1941, though they could delay induction by joining reserve units. By the spring semester of 1943, however, postponements ran out. Of the 61 senior students at Luther, 19 men were called up early and the college held a special commencement for them on March 25. Among them were Weston Noble of Riceville, Iowa, and David Preus, son of the college president.

In the remaining two years of the war male enrollment dropped precipitously. Total enrollment, averaging about 425 for some years, declined by half. Women students kept the college going those two years. Enrollment returned to the prewar level in fall 1945 and in the following two years more than doubled, the result of returning veterans supported by the GI Bill.

Professor of history Chellis Evanson maintained contact with Luther servicemen and women with a mimeographed newsletter, *Scuttlebutt*, including addresses when available. Many of them in turn wrote him, often including pictures (see the 2008 two-volume edition by history professor Marvin Slind, *Luther College Goes to War*). A total of 1,358 Luther men and 17 Luther women served in the armed forces of World War II; 35 gave their lives. A bronze wall memorial with names is in the entrance to Main.

To accommodate the surge in enrollment following the war the college purchased surplus barracks buildings from the government and moved them to campus. They functioned as classrooms, a canteen, faculty offices, and a veterans’ village on the east side of College Drive (then Highway 52) across from the municipal swimming pool. Gradually permanent structures replaced these temporary facilities—Main for classrooms and faculty offices (1952), Centennial Union for the canteen (1962), married student housing (1973), and multiple dormitories. Norby Court remained for 21 years, used in its final years by the music department.

The only new construction during the Ove Preus administration (1932-48) was Korsrud Heating Plant in 1947. A funding campaign for a women’s dormitory, begun in 1940, had raised $85,000 before fire destroyed Main in May 1942. That tragedy spurred a church-wide campaign to fund a replacement that raised more than $300,000, but materials for construction were unavailable due to the war. Brandt Hall (1950) was the beginning of an age of construction.