**Luther’s 1911 Golden Anniversary Celebration**

Luther folks take anniversaries seriously. Each anniversary prompts its own, often far-reaching changes. The Fiftieth, a hundred years ago, was the occasion for transforming the campus landscape; adding a sculpture of the college’s namesake, Martin Luther; producing the first student yearbook; and raising a substantial endowment for the college. All came at the initiative of groups in the college constituency, not from a top-down plan.

The Chicago Luther College Club engaged that city’s premier landscape architect, Jens Jensen, to redesign the Luther campus. Prior to that, a double row of elms, standing like a military honor guard, proceeded from Main to High Street. It was an orderly arrangement that appealed to many. But not to Jensen. He considered it too European, too regimented, and not reflective of the American Midwest, with its prairies, woods, hills, streams, and freedom. In his view an Iowa college needed to connect with its natural setting.

Jensen’s plan removed the double column of elms, opened meadow-like clearings, used plantings native to the area, and laid streets and walkways following the contour of the land. Subsequently, as one turned on to the campus from Leiv Erikson Drive, there was no sharp break from the patterns of nature. The buildings stood at the edges of a clearing, with scattered clusters of trees.

Another gift for that anniversary year was the statue of Martin Luther. The women of the Norwegian Synod of Lutheran churches commissioned this replica of the Rietschel sculpture that stands in Worms, Germany. Jensen chose its site on the circle joining Main, Larsen Hall, and later Koren Library, overlooking the clearing.

The student project for the anniversary was a brief history of the college, intended as the first of a yearbook series. They dedicated the publication to President Emeritus Laur. Larsen, who provided leadership for the first 41 of those 50 years.

Prominent alumni and other supporters of the college accomplished yet another major anniversary project. They raised $200,000 for the college endowment as a match for a pledge of $50,000 by railroader, James J. Hill. Ludwig Hektoen (Luther class of 1883, professor pathology at the University of Chicago, and active member of the Chicago Luther College Club) presented the endowment gift to the college on Founders Day, October 14, 1911. Elisabeth Koren, 58 years after coming to Washington Prairie with her husband, U. V. Koren, was chosen to unveil the Martin Luther statue.