Maplewood Academy

KATHY JOY PARKE

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Maplewood Academy is a coeducational boarding high school operated by the Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The roots of the school lie early in the development of the conference.

Minnesota Educational Developments

Less than two decades after the organization of the Minnesota Conference, constituents decided that their youth needed home and foreign missionary service training. In 1879 they formed a board of trustees both to encourage Minnesota youth to attend the recently established Battle Creek College in Michigan and to manage scholarships and loans for their enrollment. Battle Creek College president W. W. Prescott visited Minnesota’s camp meeting in 1887, “setting forth strong reasons why we as a people should patronize the College.” Some attended the college and benefited from Minnesota’s Educational Relief Fund, but it soon became clear that the conference needed a school in Minnesota itself to prepare students for college.

In April, 1888, the General Conference committee not only asked Prescott to promote the college at camp meetings again but also recommended that states establish conference preparatory schools. In June 1888 at Minnesota’s camp meeting, Prescott and E. W. Farnsworth once more emphasized the college’s importance, and local leaders laid plans to establish a preparatory school (high school).

During late 1888, former (and first) Minnesota Conference president, Washington Morse, voiced support for the idea, stating, “Had our people generally, from the first years of their rise, made it their inflexible rule to have their children educated in the faith ... thousands might have been saved to the cause who have gone off into the world, and now have little or no interest in the present truth or its success.”

Founding of the Minnesota Conference School

In 1886 Adventists built a church on the northwest corner of Lake Street and Fourth Avenue in Minneapolis. Two years later its members started Minnesota’s preparatory school in its basement. Although it did not open until after the General Conference session met in the church; the General Conference did promote it, voting “that each Conference donate what it shall feel disposed to, toward the Minnesota school.”

On November 14, 1888, the “Minnesota Conference School” opened as the first conference school east of the Rocky Mountains and the third Adventist preparatory school outside of Battle Creek (two Oregon schools had already started). A stellar faculty who later served in leading world church roles would welcome the nearly 60 students. Principal Charles C. Lewis led while his wife, Wiley Lewis supervised the girls’ home. Also teaching were two graduates in their first assignments—Miss Elsie M. Westphal (later Mrs. Clifford G. Howell) and Miss Sarah E. Peck. Myrtle G. Griffis (later Mrs. C. H. Parker) also soon joined the teaching staff.

In 1890, anticipating the opening of Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, and thinking most students would transfer
there, leaders planned to close the Minnesota school. Union College got delayed until 1891, however, and
Minnesotans scrambled to continue their school. Since it had released the previous faculty, it had to hire new ones.
Another 1888 graduate, E. A. Sutherland, became principal and Sutherland’s wife, Sallie, also taught. Anna Weller
(later Mrs. M. W. Newton) joined as a third teacher. Escalating enrollment led by November 15 to the recruitment of
a fourth teacher— Fred Norton. In 1891, Prescott reported a school attendance of about 75.

During the first year the school accepted some primary grade students, but discontinued the primary grades the next
year. Housing varied: By the second year male students lived with private families and girls roomed in the principal’s
home or boarded on the second floor of the tract society building. Some students took up residence in the dining hall
across the street.

In the fall of 1891, many students transferred to Union College. From 1891 to 1898, the school ran a limited winter
program, often including a canvasser’s course (learning to sell Christian books).

Many Minnesota Conference School students continued their education and spent careers in church service. Known
individuals include: Charles A. Burman; Marius and Elisabeth (Libby Johnson) Christensen; Emma (Collins) Ellis;
George Emmerson; Carrie (Hawley) Johnson; George Edmund Johnson; Lena (Mortenson) Peterson; Letty (Nichols)
Anderson; Minnie (Perkins) Owen; Alice (Redoute) Starr; Cora (Seaman) Diedricks; and Francis (Frank) Detamore.

Detamore went on to Battle Creek College where he heard Ellen White speak on the importance of church (primary
grade) schools. Impressed, he wrote a letter back home to Minnesota, stating his willingness to return and start a
school with no pay other than room and board. As a result, in 1898, he opened the first Minnesota church school at
Good Thunder.

Relocation to Anoka and Renamed the Minnesota Industrial School

By 1898 leaders deemed the Minneapolis church as no longer suitable for a school. The basement classrooms had
poor ventilation, housing was inadequate, and many felt concerned about the allurements of the surrounding city.
Minnesota Conference president, C. W. Flaiz, pleaded with constituents to provide a school on a farm. After the
purchase of a farm southwest of Anoka, opposition arose to having a boarding school in that area, so church leaders
sold the property and obtained temporary quarters in Anoka’s former Commercial Hotel on the northeast corner of
Ferry and Main Streets.

The “Minnesota Industrial School” opened in October 18, 1899, again boasting an outstanding faculty team who later
served in prominent church roles. Not surprisingly, Frank Detamore was the first principal. Teachers included Miss
Frances M. Kennedy and Myron Winchell while Arthur and Mary Moon cooked meals. Later faculty included: Otto J.
Graf (likely as principal); Harold J. Sheldon; Benjamin Francis; and probably E. W. Catlin (likely as principal). The
1903-1904 faculty had Marshall B. Van Kirk as principal and Miss Wavie Tubbs as a teacher.

About 65 students enrolled initially, but by the 1903-1904 school term enrollment was around 40. The three-story
building encompassed classrooms and administrative areas on the first floor, kitchen and dining hall in the basement,
girls’ dormitory on the second floor, and boys’ dormitory on the third floor. Besides traditional academic classes, the
school also taught commercial and manual arts. Students held Bible meetings, shared religious literature, raised
funds for missions, and helped the poor and sick. The school’s missionary spirit is revealed in a statement explaining
why there’s no known photograph of the students: “Some of our students wanted a picture of the school, but we
talked it over and decided that we would rather donate the amount to foreign fields. Seven dollars was thus given.

Relocation to Maple Plain and Renamed Maplewood Academy

Leaders continued searching for a rural setting, finally purchasing a farm near Maple Plain in 1902, but lacked funds
to construct buildings. A November 1902 business meeting determined to raise $8,000 for the new school with
$1,500 pledged immediately. Additional fund raising progressed slowly, but, with renewed zeal at the 1904 camp
meeting, leaders raised sufficient money to erect the main building debt-free so that school could open that fall. The
94-acre farm was on a beautiful piece of land sloping gently to the shores of (later ). Today it is the site of the Near
Wilderness Settlement in Baker Park Preserve. Originally, it included woods, farm land, and orchards. The setting in a
maple grove soon brought a name change—Maplewood Academy.

Fifty-seven students enrolled in the fall of 1903 and the faculty welcoming them were all Minnesota natives. Otto O.
Bernstein was the principal assisted by a faculty consisting of his wife, Myrtle (Franklin) Bernstein; Miss Caroline
Hopkins; and Miss Lena Rosenthal along with Wavie D. Tubbs and Harold J. Sheldon, both having taught at the
school. Ralph E. Campbell supervised the farm, which provided employment and a wholesome setting for the
students.

The administration building, constructed in 1904, was a two and a half story 40-foot square structure initially housing
most operations. In 1905 the school erected a 30-foot by 24-foot dormitory with 26 rooms—again, debt-free.
Enrollment, however, soon exceeded school capacity. By 1910, with a capacity for 80 students, the school had 120
attending. Three or four students crowded into rooms designed for two, and a few slept in the hall. The school had to
reject some applicants because of space limitations. The needs were obvious, and additional buildings soon
appeared, with church members and leaders (including the conference president) participating in their construction. In
1911 they erected a girls’ dormitory with the same dimensions as the first dormitory and added a chapel and dining
room onto the administration building. To provide student labor, the academy added a chicken coop and blacksmith
and carpentry shops. Then it put up an eight-room teachers' cottage in 1915 and built an addition to the barn. Electricity arrived in 1917. A 30-foot extension to the girls' dormitory in 1919 provided 14 more rooms and a parlor. The school erected a three-room cottage to quarantine patients with communicable diseases, completed just in time for a smallpox epidemic. In 1921 a 30-foot addition expanded the boys' dormitory. Located in the maple grove, all buildings faced a rectangular lawn, the administration building being on the south (lake) side, the girls' dorm on the west, the boys' dorm on the east, the teachers' cottage and isolation cottage on the north. The farm on the north side of the property hosted dairy cattle and chickens. The campus still used horses for work and transportation. Gardens and berry patches provided student employment, school provisions, and produce to sell in the community.

Studies included traditional subjects, Bible studies, mission courses, and church history classes. The academy also offered practical classes such as stenography, type-setting, music, hydrotherapy, first-aid, sewing, millinery, cooking, farming, blacksmithing, and carpentry. While the school was college preparatory, during its early years it also offered some seventh and eighth grade level classes when needed.

In 1905, Bernstein explained the financial terms for attendance: "Two hours' industrial work is required daily of each student for which an allowance of five dollars is made thus reducing the student's monthly expense to ten dollars. Board (three meals per day), tuition, rooms, light, heat, laundry work etc., is covered by the ten dollars." School maintenance provided some student employment but later the academy opened industries such as the Fibre Furniture Shop which made furniture to sell to stores like Donaldson's in Minneapolis. Some students also worked at the school during the summer or as literature evangelists.

With more than 100 students at the close of the second school year, Bernstein reported "the following nationalities and number of students were represented: English, thirty-three; German, nineteen; Swede, seventeen; Norwegian, twelve; Danish, five; Irish, four; Bohemian, three; Dutch, two; French, one; Polish, one; Scotch, one; Mexican, one; Swiss, one; and African, one."

Enrollment steadily rose. By 1920 it reached 150 and, during the Maple Plain years, it peaked in 1927 at 170. The first graduating class in 1909 had two members, Carl J. Martinson and Winifred V. Halverson. Martinson became a noted physician, founding Minnetonka Hospital. He was a life-long Maplewood supporter and an avid collector of Adventist history memorabilia. Sadly, Halverson passed away less than two years later of scarlet fever complications during her junior year at Union College. The 1910 Maplewood class had five graduates, and classes grew until, by the 1920s, they had close to 20 graduates.

In 1917, after a University of Minneapolis review, the Minnesota State Board of Education accredited Maplewood Academy. When Adventist professor and education administrator Frederick Griggs visited the school in 1917, he stated "that there was no finer academy in the denomination than Maplewood." The academy had become a first-rate school. Both Adventist and non-Adventist students (as many as half the student body were non-members) to benefit from its environment.

One noted non-Adventist student was the son of Scandinavian immigrants, Adrian Lauritzen, who entered Maplewood in 1921. Not being Adventist, he had a rubber stamp made to use on his school papers with the message, "Be a good Lutheran." As he interacted with students and faculty, however, and became immersed in Bible classes and spiritual activities, he found something unique that he wanted to be a part of. After graduation in 1925, Lauritzen became an Adventist and soon his parents, Adrian and his wife (Evelyn Sorensen, Maplewood class of 1940), taught at Maplewood several years. Acquiring a doctorate in music, he later served at the McPhail School of Music and the University of Minnesota. He always enjoyed preaching and evangelism. Dubbed "Mr. Maplewood" in later years, Dr. Lauritzen was devoted to promoting the academy and preserving the history of the school and of Seventh-day Adventists in Minnesota, resulting in his book, Saints of the Northern Star. In 1985, designated Maplewood's first Alumnus of the Year, he stated, "If it hadn't been for Maplewood, I would never have become an Adventist."

Relocation to Hutchinson

Shortly after Maplewood's organization, the Northern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (comprised of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa) opened the "Danish-Norwegian Seminary" in 1910 at Hutchinson, Minnesota, providing immigrants with instruction in their native tongues. It offered both high school and college classes. In 1917, the school expanded and later took the name "Hutchinson Theological Seminary." By 1928, as students became fluent in English, enrollment declined and the seminary encountered financial challenges. Most seminary students took academy level classes and, since Minnesota had an academy at Maple Plain, leaders proposed a merger of the seminary and Maplewood at Hutchinson. Despite some resistance, at the 1928 camp meeting the constituencies successfully voted the consolidation. For a time, some classes continued in foreign languages. Even today, Maplewood continues to provide a multi-cultural experience.

In the fall of 1928, the combined school opened at Hutchinson as "Maplewood Academy" under the leadership of Alvin W. Johnson, the former Maple Plain principal. Several faculty from the merged schools served Maplewood in Hutchinson, including Wavie D. Tubbs, the only instructor who served at the Minnesota Industrial School in Anoka, Maplewood Academy in Maple Plain and Maplewood at Hutchinson.

Maplewood Academy was now located at the summit of a broad hill, leading to its designation as "The School on the Hill." The imposing brick structure housed the entire school plant—classrooms, offices, library, chapel, kitchen and dining hall, book bindery and print shop. To the west was the 160-acre farm and to the north was a wooded area. In
1932, Maplewood built a gymnasium, the basement housing a craft shop producing wood products and a broom factory.46 By 1955, the property had enlarged to 281 acres.46

As enrollment steadily climbed, leadership envisioned an ambitious building plan.47 In early 1958, a newly-built multipurpose structure housed a cafeteria, music facilities, and a home economics department.48 In 1959, construction began on a 700-seat capacity church, the first services being held April 8, 1961.49 Arriving in 1960 to serve as vice principal and music director, Maplewood 1942 graduate, Lyle C. Anderson, became principal in 1961 and oversaw further building developments (departing in 1973 as the second longest serving Maplewood principal).50 During Anderson’s tenure, the school constructed a 70-room girls’ dormitory in 1963.51 In 1967 a new 2,000-seat capacity gymnasium went up between the girls’ dormitory and the future boys’ dormitory site (the 1939 gym being re-purposed and eventually demolished). Completion of the new gymnasium was just in time to host camp meeting (it continues to meet there).52 In 1968 the campus added a 60-foot by 143-foot book bindery, a Harris Pine Mill factory opened, and construction began on a boys’ dormitory occupied the fall of 1969.53

During the early 1970s, administration discussed the future of Maplewood’s grand old administration building. In October 1976 the building was listed on the Minnesota Inventory of Historic Places and later the property was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.54 Maintaining the building, however, was challenging, and on June 19, 1978, the conference voted a new administration complex.55 On June 10, 1979, a ground-breaking ceremony took place.56 The new building rose during the next year. Friends, faculty, and students gathered on January 30, 1980, to pay tribute to the older structure. Moving into the new building started January 29, 1980, and on February 6, 1980, demolition of the old building began. It was a tearful day for many alumni and friends. The old building had served Adventists and the Hutchinson community for 78 years.57 The current administration building chapel rests on the site of the former building—a fitting tribute to the beloved edifice.58

The ambitious building program was a reflection of growing enrollment in the school, steadily climbing through the decades, reaching a peak enrollment of 239 in 1970 and again in 1979.59 Like many academies, though, Maplewood experienced a rapid enrollment decline through the 1980s. By 1985 it had dropped to 118.60 While other schools have closed, however, Maplewood has maintained a solid program, with enrollment stabilizing around 100 each year.61

The continued welfare of the school has resulted from active support from alumni, the Minnesota Conference, and other resources combined with a team of solid faculty. From 1991 to 2004 and again in 2010 through 2012, Marshall Bowers led as the longest serving Maplewood principal. Marshall and his wife (Lois Burghart, Maplewood class of 1971) have continued to advocate for the school into their retirement and were designated Alumni of the Year in 2018.

Through the years, many alumni have served in their communities and throughout the world, laboring with a dedication representative of the education they received “back home” in Minnesota. Several have taken church positions, serving as pastors, missionaries, teachers, administrators, health care workers, and in a variety of other roles. But most importantly, students acquired a knowledge of God and a desire to share it with others. Students, faculty, and staff members have been transformed as they passed through the doors of the school, whether it be a poorly ventilated church basement, a former hotel, buildings nestled in a maple grove beside a lake, an impressive edifice set high upon a hill, or a modern-style educational complex. Time has changed the location and physical structures, but it has never altered the school’s mission to lead young people to Jesus and train them to labor for eternal goals as echoed in the words on the school seal—“Educating for Eternity.”62

**School Address**

700 Main Street North, Hutchinson, MN 55350

**Accreditations**

Adventist Accrediting Association

National Council for Private School Accreditation

Nonpublic Education Council, Minnesota Department of Education

**Principals**

Minnesota Conference School (1888-1898): C. C. Lewis, 1888-1890; E. A. Sutherland, 1890-1891; Unknown, 1891-1898.

Minnesota Industrial School (1899-1904): Frank Detamore, probably 1899-1900; Otto J. Graf, probably 1900-1901; E. W. Catlin, probably 1901-1902; M. B. Van Kirk, probably 1903-1904.


SOURCES

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Flaiz, C. W. "Shall Minnesota Have A School?" *The Minnesota Worker*, November 9, 1898.
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NOTES

5. Morse, "Items of Advent Experience During the Past Fifty Years – No. 6." *ARH*, November 6, 1888, 689, 690.

49. Mrs. Ivan Groulik, "First Services in the Hutchinson Church," *Northern Union Outlook*, May 9, 1961, 10; Mrs. Edwin H. Peterson, "Hutchinson Church History," *Northern Union Outlook*, June 7, 1968, 12, 13.


