A Presidential Timeline

1862 – The Rev. Dr. Axel Nyquist founds the College. It is named for Gustavus a great Swedish king of the 13th century. Nyquist is elected the College’s first president. When Augustana Lutheran Church of Red Wing, Minn., refuses to build the school, Nyquist sets out to raise the money himself. The first seven students are in place by 1863.

1863 – The Rev. Dr. Nyquist moves to the site of the college, which is named Gustavus Adolphus.

1873 – Amid debate over moving the college from St. Peter, the school opens as Gustavus Adolphus College. Directors face the problem of two names: the modern American college (now called Gustavus Adolphus College) and the College of Augustana (kept as the name of the college’s Augustana Lutheran Church.

1876 – With the completion of the main building (now known as Old Main) in St. Peter, the school opens as Gustavus Adolphus College.

1881 – When Nyquist resigns to pursue his own academic career, the board of directors names the Rev. Dr. John S. Kendall of St. Peter to take Nyquist’s place. Kendall is the first non-clergy member of the board and is the college’s first lay president.

1888 – The Rev. Dr. Mats Mattson resigns after 24 years in office. The board of directors names the Rev. Dr. J.P. Uhler as his successor. Uhler, who is more of a scholar than his predecessor, becomes Gustavus Adolphus’s first American president.

1892 – The college elects as president the Rev. Dr. John J. Frodeen, a faculty member of 72 years on the faculty. Frodeen, a graduate of the college and the University of Minnesota, has served as president of St. Peter, the school opens as Gustavus Adolphus.

1894 – The college receives its first Nobel Foundation gift, a gold medal in memory of Alfred Nobel. A temporary summer dormitory is built.

1905 – Auditorium erected.

1927 – The Greater Gustavus Endowment is introduced in 1914, library facilities are expanded, and a growing enrollment, a nearly $10 million budget, 130 faculty members, and new library facilities are added. The college is able to recruit a record first-year class, 1927 – The Greater Gustavus Endowment is introduced in 1914, library facilities are expanded, and a growing enrollment, a nearly $10 million budget, 130 faculty members, and new library facilities are added. The college is able to recruit a record first-year class.

1933 – Auditorium is completely gutted by a fire.

1934–1935 – Enrollment drops as a result of the Great Depression.

1936 – The college named the O.J. Johnson Student Union in honor of the college’s first 20th-century president. The school opens as Gustavus Adolphus College.

1942 – “O.J.’s” successor is 1922 Gustavus graduate and psychology professor and Minnesota Conference president Leonard Edgar M. Carlson. Carlson is the college’s first non-clergy member of the board of directors and is the college’s first lay president. Carlson, a 1922 graduate of the college and the University of Minnesota, has served as president of St. Peter.

1949 – The college elects as president the Rev. Dr. John S. Kendall, who becomes the first 20th-century president of the college. Kendall, a 1922 graduate of the college and the University of Minnesota, has served as president of St. Peter.

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1963 – Alfred Nobel Hall of Science is built.

1969 – The college elects as president the Rev. Dr. John S. Kendall, who becomes the first 20th-century president of the college. Kendall, a 1922 graduate of the college and the University of Minnesota, has served as president of St. Peter.

1971 – Fine arts center built.

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1984 – In 1985 the arboretum is begun in 1973 with the planting of the first tree seedlings by volunteers.

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1998 – Tornado severely damages campus.

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2002, 1960 graduate Dennis Johnson is named the O.J. Johnson Student Union in honor of the college’s first 20th-century president.