



THE INGRAM ESTATE Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Presented below is a brief history of the Ingram estate, which Immanuel Lutheran College has called home since 1963. A brief background of the Ingram family is necessary to begin. Orrin H. Ingram, one of Eau Claire, Wisconsin's founding fathers, was one of many lumber barons who made their fortune from the once plentiful white pines of Wisconsin. He came to Eau Claire from New York state and was very influential in the early history of Eau Claire. His wife, Cornelia, was an active church volunteer and supporter of area charities. Orrin (O.H.) and Cornelia Ingram had 6 children, 4 of whom lived to be adults. The sons, Charles and Erskine, helped in the lumbering trade and the other family businesses. Daughters Miriam and Fannie married men from the area. Most of the family built homes on Third Avenue near the First Congregational Church where they were members.

Erskine Ingram, the second son, was in his mid 50's when he decided to move away from the city. He contracted for the construction of his home, which at that time was "in the country" even though only a mile and a half south of the city. Erskine Ingram's home, now called Ingram Hall, is an example of Georgian Revival architecture. It was built in 1922 at an estimated cost of between \$150,000 - \$200,000. The original estate included nearly 200 acres of land, the Ingram home, a caretaker's home, a barn, a stable and even an 18-hole golf course. Ingram Hall was constructed by a local firm and the landscaping was carefully planned by an expert designer. Since the original site was quite barren, Ingram had a variety of trees brought in from many parts of the country.



Early Photo of Ingram Hall

Erskine was married to Harriet "Louise" Coggeshall. They had one daughter who died in infancy and one son, Orrin Henry. Orrin (who chose to use his middle name Henry) and his wife, Hortense Bigelow Ingram, had 4 children. He and his family were living in White Bear Lake, MN when the home was finished. Harriet died in 1944, and after the death of Henry's father in 1954 Henry donated the estate to the Minnesota Foundation to be used as a retirement home. The Minnesota Foundation operated at a loss for some time and decided to sell the estate in 1963. It was this Minnesota Foundation that then sold the estate to the CLC. Since the Minnesota Foundation was a non-profit organization and had received the property as a gift, it was believed that a buyer could be charged only \$85,000 - the amount spent to renovate the mansion.



Young Erskine Ingram

The Lord's hand can be seen in His directing of the purchase of the Ingram estate from the Minnesota Foundation. The property itself was discovered "accidentally" in 1963 by Arvid Gullerud, who was then pastor of the Eau Claire Messiah congregation. He and a secular co-worker "happened to be" in the area of Corydon Park looking over a piece of property that the co-worker was interested in buying. As Arvid looked through the trees he spotted the caretaker of the Ingram estate and said, "Let's go talk with that man and see what he has to say." As it turned out, "that man" happened to be Mr. Zimmerman, the Ingram's caretaker, who told Arvid that the Minnesota Foundation was looking for a buyer for their property. Arvid quickly recognized the property's potential as a site for ILC. He contacted then President Paul Albrecht and the head of the Relocation Committee, Gerhardt Pieper. This Relocation Committee was in the process of looking for a new home for Immanuel Lutheran College which had outgrown its campus in Mankato, Minnesota.



ILC - Mankato, MN

After they looked over the property and were notified of the cost, they immediately set into motion a special CLC convention to deal with the purchase of the property. Pastor Pieper himself paid the \$100 necessary to hold the property until the church body could meet. An extra \$25 was later given to hold the property a little longer.

Pastor Gullerud felt that the CLC had the strong support of Mrs. Henry Ingram working behind the scenes. She was an advocate of higher education and whenever an obstacle was put in the way of our purchasing the estate, the lawyer who was handling the purchase seemed to be there to smooth the way. A fraternal organization and the Catholic Church were also interested in purchasing the estate and using it as a retreat, but the CLC had submitted its bid first.

After the property was purchased by the CLC, many hands were needed to turn this estate into a school. The stable was converted into a men's dormitory on the upper level and classrooms on the lower level. The barn was converted into a seminary building. The work had to be completed in just the few short months of summer, but were blessed with many volunteers from congregations around the country. Pastors Paul and Chris Albrecht headed up the two building renovation teams. The home and annex were already prepared for occupancy since the Minnesota Foundation had constructed fire escapes, a kitchen to state code, and other necessary facilities for dormitory use. Once again the hand of the Lord was seen and praised by our church body.

Other personal remembrances of those days have been recorded on a taped interview with Arvid Gullerud and a video of a few others for ILC's early days have been taken in order to preserve them for our future generations. We are hoping that those who were involved with the ILC and CLC beginnings will also share their stories with us. Professor John Reim and his volunteers are working at making the old Sem House a home for such pieces of history. The Sem House will then be our CLC Museum where the past can be shared with generations to come.



Sem House Museum

A history of ILC is being planned by the Publishing Committee and a history of the Ingram estate will be ready for publication in mid-2004.

PICTURE TOUR OF THE CAMPUS



INGRAM HALL
Library and Seminary Classrooms



NORTHWEST HALL
*Offices, CLC Book House,
Computer Lab*



REIM HALL
Classrooms, Science and Computer Labs



COMMONS/GYM
Dining Hall, Student Lounge, Gymnasium



SOUTH HALL
Girls' Dormitory



NORTH HALL
Boys' Dormitory

This Ingram property was truly God's gift to the young Church of the Lutheran Confession. As it did in those early days of Immanuel Lutheran College it still serves the purpose to help our young people to grow in grace and the knowledge of their Savior and to train future pastors and teachers for the work in the Lord's kingdom. To that end we ask that you keep this school, its students and staff, in your prayers. For only with a church body centered in His Word can we hope to preserve the precious heritage we have received from the hand of the Lord.