

Early History of the College

Newberry College celebrated 150 years of service and educational leadership to the Newberry community in South Carolina and to the Lutheran Church in the 2006-07 academic year.

Newberry's heritage began in 1828 at the annual meeting of the Lutheran Synod in South Carolina and Adjacent States—nearly thirty years before it was chartered as a college by the State of South Carolina. At the 1828 meeting, the Rev. John Bachman, President of the Synod, recommended the establishment of a seminary to train Lutheran ministers. The following year the Synod followed his advice and voted to establish a seminary and classical academy.

The new seminary-academy opened its doors in February 1831, near Pomaria, S.C. (about fifteen miles from the College's present location); it moved to neighboring Lexington in 1832 and remained there for twenty-four years.

In 1854 the Synod voted to make the institution a degree-granting college; in 1855 to move it to Newberry; and in 1856—just before the granting of the charter on December 20, 1856—to name it Newberry College.

A preparatory department opened in 1858; the College and Seminary began operation in February 1859.

It prospered until the Civil War when nearly all the faculty and students were called into military service. At war's end, the only College building was occupied by federal troops. In 1868, as a result of the physical condition of the building, the military occupation, and the depletion of the endowment funds, the College faced a severe financial crisis. St. John's Lutheran Church in Walhalla, SC, in the extreme northwestern corner of the state, offered the College a new home and the offer was accepted. In 1877, through the efforts of Newberry residents, the College returned to its original site in Newberry. The first building on the Newberry College campus, built in 1858, was razed in 1877. The present Smeltzer Hall was built on its site the same year.

The Synod discontinued operating the seminary for several years, but in 1872 reopened it at Roanoke College, Salem, VA. In 1884 the Seminary returned to Newberry where it remained until 1898. That year the seminary moved to Mt. Pleasant, SC, and in 1911 to Columbia, SC.

The College has maintained its association with the Lutheran Church. Today Newberry is related to the South Carolina, Southeastern, Florida-Bahamas, and Caribbean Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Visit the Newberry College website for additional information: <http://www.newberry.edu>.