

I want to thank the University for honoring my Great Grandfather with this statue, and for the many kindnesses the University has shown my family over the years. I am especially grateful for the kindness shown my Aunt Mary Kennedy who spent most of her 99 years in Ada and as always been a strong supporter of ONU.

In my remarks I will be referring to a personal family history prepared by my father, Dr. Stephen J. Kennedy. A copy of this history will be provided to the University shortly. Only the family can truly appreciate the sacrifices made to bring Ohio Northern University in to being.

In 1867, at 28 years of age, H.S. Lehr came to Ada to found his “**select**” school which would evolve into Ohio Northern University. He had only one year of formal school by the time he was 16. Of German background, he had taught himself correct English by using the phonetics of a dictionary.

He had taught in a one-room school house, fought in the Civil War and had himself endured extreme hardship to obtain a college degree. Small of stature, his journal recalls that to get his first teaching job, he made sure he was interviewed at night, “**so they would not see how little I am.**”

Enrollment in the first year of his select school was 56 and tuition was \$6 a term.

If H.S. Lehr could visit the school he founded today, he would be amazed at the facilities, ONU's growth and the luxury of student accommodations. If you wish to see the modest house of the first president of ONU, it still stands at 310 South Main Street between the church and the carryout.

However, I believe he would be most proud and pleased with the student-centered focus of the University. His own struggle to obtain an education directed him to design a flexible curriculum and accommodate student needs. In fact, ***“at the Northwestern Ohio Normal School, every person could pursue any study at any time. This had been the idea of H. S. Lehr back in his college days – a school where a student could enter at any time during the year and find classes to suit his state of advancement. Country school teachers could enter in the fall for advanced work. In the spring after their schools closed they could return and take up their work where they had left off in the autumn. The farmer’s sons and daughters who had to help at home during***

***planting and harvesting time could find one winter to another just the schedule of classes they needed. In the summer school of “Normal Term” there were classes for advanced students and for beginners for any who came.”***

Today, he would not be surprised at ONU’s enrollment but he would be at tuition. An advertisement from 1891 reads as follows:

***“Do you want an education – classical, scientific, business, stenographic, legal, military, pharmaceutical, musical, or fine arts? Do you want to be a teacher or an engineer, civil or electrical? Do you want to educate your children?***

***If so, send for the catalogue of the Ohio Normal University, Ada, Ohio, one of the largest and best schools in the country. Last annual enrollment 3,349; 26 states represented; also several foreign countries. Advantages unexcelled, expenses low.***

***Will furnish room, good board in private families, and tuition 10 weeks for \$28; 49 weeks \$118. Has university powers and confers all***

***degrees. Teachers thorough and experienced. Students can enter at any time to advantage. Classes in every grade including advanced classes in mathematics, the sciences Latin, Greek, German and French are sustained every term. If things are not found as represented, will pay traveling expenses. Send for catalogue. H. S. Lehr, President, Ada, Ohio”.***

In the reimbursement of travel expenses, he may have been unique in offering a money back guarantee.

***“On Founder’s Day, 1897 – just 31 years after Mr. Lehr had come to Ada unknown, a special convocation was held. Hundreds of former students came back to grasp the hand of the man whose ingenuity and perseverance had made it possible for them to secure an education, to enter a profession, and to achieve success. There were short addresses by the presidents of neighboring colleges and by other distinguished men and women who had come to do honor to the president of this unique institution.***

***Dr. Sylvester F. Scovel, President of the College of Wooster said,  
“This occasion is a colossal compliment to President Lehr who was  
neither born great nor did he have greatness thrust upon him; but, far  
better, he achieved greatness. Napoleon said a great man is he who is  
able to do great things. We have in President Lehr that American  
pluck which makes him succeed whether others wish it or not.”***

Again, I want to thank the University for honoring my Great Grandfather  
and letting me be part of this dedication.