

1978

The Adolph and Ella Frankenthal Reading Room

St. Norbert College

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The Adolf and Ella Frankenthal Reading Room

The Adolf and Ella Frankenthal Memorial Reading Room is the focal point of a learning center which itself will become the hub of campus life.

The primary function of the room is to serve as a study area for patrons, a place for reflection. And because of its importance, the Frankenthal Reading Room has been designed as one of the most visually—appealing parts of the new library. It is a garden area, filled with lush, native and tropical plants and tree—height shrubbery.

Spaciousness is one of the key features of the Frankenthal Room. The “outdoors” atmosphere will be accentuated in the way that the garden reading room opens onto the main library area. Students will be naturally drawn into the room to make use of its casual, bench—type seating.

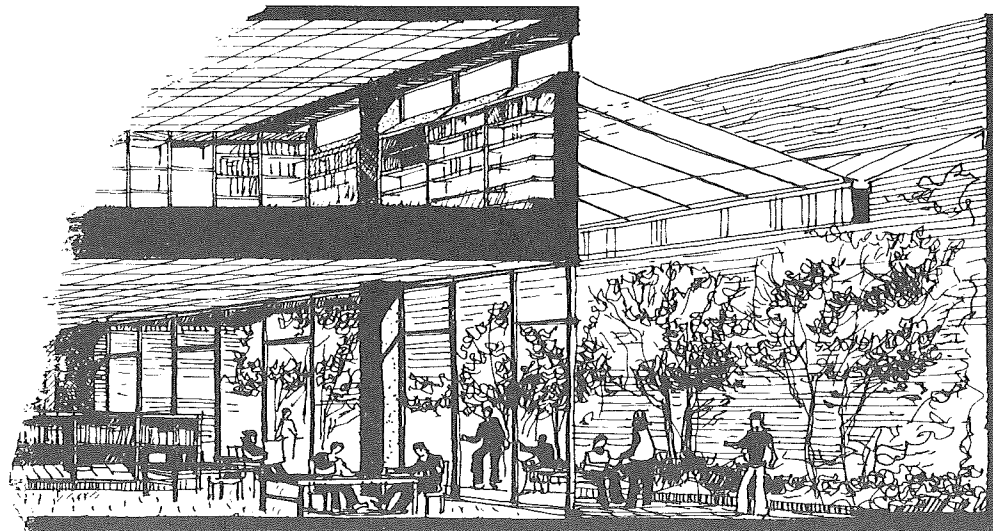
The Frankenthal Room’s ceiling, two stories

high, is of plexiglas so that the entire section of the building is bathed in light.

The greenery of the garden area has as its backdrop the handsome brick wall of the Hall of Fine Arts. Architects have sought to make the side—by—side buildings work for one another, using the Hall of Fine Arts’ outdoor surfaces to enhance the interior design of the Frankenthal Room.

The library learning center itself has more than an acre of floor space, and room for 400 student stations. The building will ultimately house nearly 225,000 volumes, and careful planning has assured its use well into the 21st Century.

The Adolf and Ella Frankenthal Memorial Reading Room will symbolize for St. Norbert College students the love of work and the devotion to freedom which characterizes the Frankenthal family.



Frankenthal Reading Room

Adolf and Ella Frankenthal, in whose honor this library reading room is dedicated, were immigrants, refugees from Nazi Germany, who found their desire for freedom and love of work fulfilled in America.

Adolf Frankenthal was born in 1894 in Altenlotheim, Germany, and there he learned the meat and livestock trade upon which he was to build his success. In 1921 he wed the lovely Ella Stern, and throughout the decade of the Twenties, Adolf, Ella and their son, Siegfried Willy, led a comfortable life.

But harsh times lay ahead — the rise of Hitlerism in the early 1930’s. Adolf had long been a courageous leader in the Jewish community, and that leadership made him an early target for abuse — extortion, blackmail, physical beatings.

Stripped of their home and all their worldly goods by the infamous “race laws” of 1935, the Frankenthals were forced to flee Germany and to seek refuge in America. While grateful to America for the freedom and opportunity it offered them, the depression—troubled Thirties was still a difficult period for immigrants. His wife ill, Adolf sought work as a common laborer. The jobs he found were short—lived, and by 1937 Adolf had the added burden of caring for his elderly parents, newly—arrived from Germany.

No prospects in sight, that spring they moved to Green Bay where Adolf resolved to turn to the business he knew best — buying and selling livestock. The family scraped together a few hundred dollars, and with 14—year—old Siegfried acting as interpreter for his father, they began their business. Through hard work

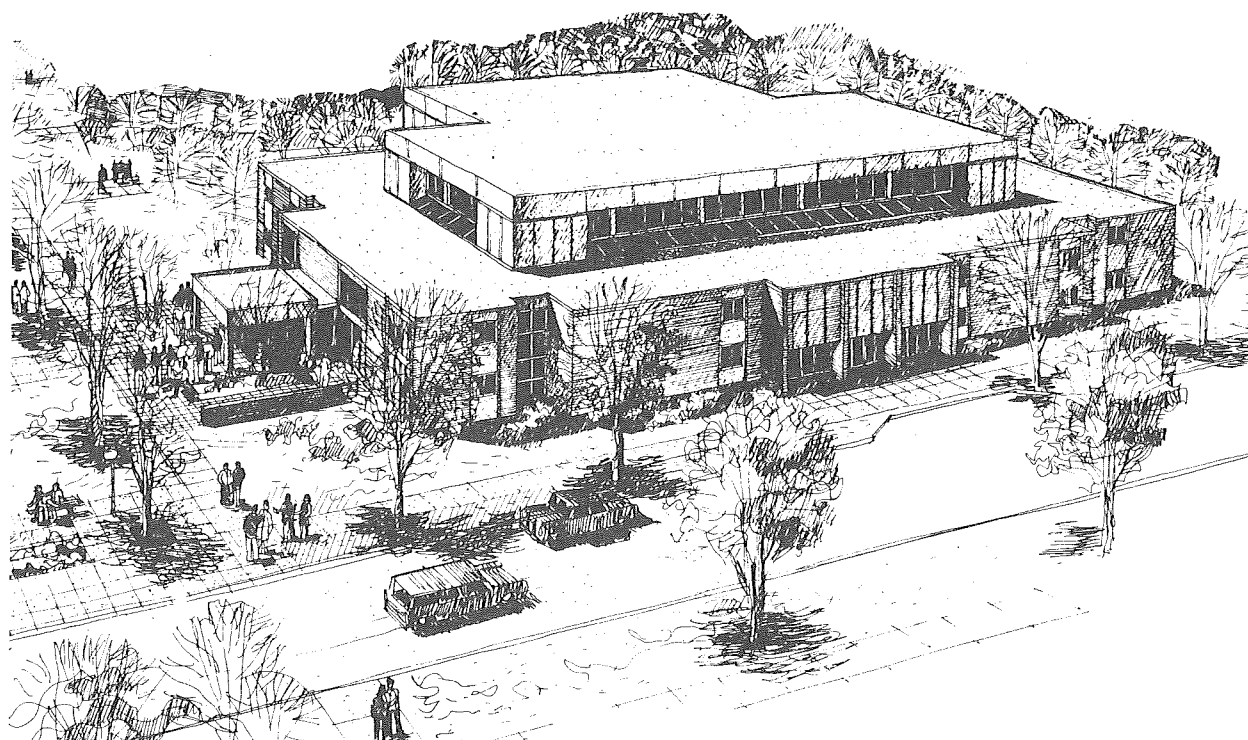
and total family commitment, the venture grew into a thriving livestock and farm real estate business — A. Frankenthal and Son.

Although Adolf’s father died only two years later, his mother lived for 17 years, cared for solely by Ella. The daughter—in—law’s devotion was such that son Siegfried later called it a modern story of the Book of Ruth: “... I have had a complete account of what you have done for your mother—in—law after your husband’s death; you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know previously. May the Lord reward what you have done!”

The Frankenthal operations continued to expand, but Adolf himself died in 1951, weakened by diabetes and a heart condition. Siegfried still heads the family’s Packerland Packing, which from its humble beginnings in 1937 has grown to become one of the largest privately—owned meat packing companies in the nation.

It is fitting, perhaps, that Adolf and Ella Frankenthal, who fled the Nazi book—burnings and racial persecution, will be honored in a center of learning.

Their memorial is a triumph for liberty and knowledge and a defeat for obstruction of learning and dictatorships — a reading room, a “book center” where wisdom may be preserved. For books, Channing said, “are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are true levelers. They give to all, who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race.”



St. Norbert College Library Learning Center