

**The Sentimental Education of Henry Warren Roth: Spiritual Formation,
Pedagogy, and Theological Learning in Nineteenth-Century Chicago**
by Anthony J. Elia, Burke Library, Columbia University

Introduction

The spiritual formation and direction of institutions comes from the spiritual formation and direction of its individuals. And these processes of formation ultimately come from moments of questioning, tragedy, and discernment. This year, 2011, marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the start of the American Civil War—the war “between” the states. That first December of the conflict, a young man, twenty-three years old, had been called from his travels, lecturing, preaching, and Hebrew studies in Pittsburgh. He was summoned by the news of his younger brother’s deteriorating health—his brother having recently been among the federal soldiers engaged in troop training and preparations against their rebel opponents in central Kentucky. The Battle of Munfordsville, Kentucky, which pit Union Colonel John T. Wilder against Confederate Brigadier General James R. Chalmers, would not happen for another year there. The horrors of war, though, were not simply in guns and their leaden bullets, but such things as dysentery and other illnesses, which decimated troops on both sides.

The young sickly man, heroically named George Washington Roth, was a nineteen-year-old boy, who’d suffered over the years with his own faith and had just come to being saved at the Mourner’s bench. His older brother, Henry, came and sat near him, as the younger George sweated his brow and lay in agony, waiting for his untimely end.

On December 12, 1861, the young Henry Warren Roth wrote the first stanza of a poem about his nineteen-year-old brother, George . . .

On his rough cot he lay in the hospital tent
away from the kiss of his mother,
And the gleam of the low-burning candles had lent
To his dreams the dear face of his brother.
But it was not a dream for his brother stood there
O’er that weak, wasted form was he crying
And that thin, bony hand did he clasp with a prayer,
And kiss for the soldier-boy dying.

As Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust noted in her book *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Roth’s poem has the marks of death poetry written during the war, including the desire and pining for the young dead’s mother, recognition of distance and isolation from family, and an exaltation of the heroic (see pp. 13, 16, 177 in Faust, for example).

Fifty-two years later, in 1913, the elderly and snow-bearded Dr. Roth, who was in increasingly poor health, read the fullness of this poem at a banquet, before a crowd of admirers. Clearly, the death of his younger brother was something that had pressed on him for his entire life. Something that had informed him and directed how he would navigate through the world of theological education and praxis for the next half century.

This paper will address the education of a young man—the gradual learning of a nineteenth-century thinker, writer, pastor, and theologian, who struggled with the doubt, pain, loss, and suffering of his place and times. The spiritual formation, pedagogy, and theological learning that we shall see is that of a young boy turned man, living and experiencing the Word of God in mostly rural Pennsylvania, until his travels bring him into the broader sphere of his mentor William Passavant in Chicago and elsewhere in the 1860s. By the time Roth went to live in Chicago in 1887, to take over a parish, his reputation as a pedagogue was significant, and led him to be one of the primary co-founders of the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary. Today we will look at what led up to this, and who this talented thinker and teacher was.

Sentimental Education of Henry Warren Roth and Henry Adams (1838-1918)

The question of education is a significant one: “What exactly *is* education?” When I set out on this learning enterprise to research and write about Henry Warren Roth (HWR), I found myself on an excavation of decaying materials, dried-up papers and forgotten archives, and relics of sentimental value. In one of many old wooden boxes among my archival travels, I discovered old clothing artifacts, belongings of HWR’s wife, Elizabeth (who lived to be nearly 100), as well as the effects of his adopted daughter (who was actually his niece, Met)—glasses and glass cases, fans, gloves, and an old mourner’s dress, black laced, and frilled in its lugubrious elegance.

A “sentimental education...” is a reference to two distinct works, each bearing some significance on the present investigation and the work of Henry W. Roth: first, the novelistic attempts of Gustave Flaubert, whose influential *L’Éducation sentimentale* (“Sentimental Education”), published in 1869, conveys the sensitivity of human education on that French level of living and loving in the world, but not learning in the classroom. In fact, Frédéric Moreau, the chief character in this novel, at one point grows displeased with his studies, and opts for walking around Paris, meeting people, or even visiting a prison, to being stuck in a classroom. The power of the non-traditional understanding of education is brightly elaborated throughout the novel. And it is done in a way that utilizes provocative, even slightly sarcastic, ruminations on the society it is examining during the Revolution of 1848 and the abdication of Louis Philippe I (d. 1850). The “sentimentality” of this work, its characters and plot, and the period afford us reflection on “time past,” and how those feelings about what we learned and how we learned it are to be understood and treated as part of our education.

The second reference is to the masterful, unique, and highly influential *The Education of Henry Adams* by Henry Adams himself. When first encountering the work of Mr. Adams (a direct descendant of two presidents—grandson of John Quincy Adams and great-grandson of John Adams), I was only slightly aware of his importance to American politics and letters and less imbued in his educational theory (if we can call it such). I was perhaps even less aware of the striking (even uncanny) similarities in the pedagogical lifestyle and experiences shared by Henry Adams and Henry Warren Roth—similarities that may be the mark of any educated “man of learning” in the nineteenth century, but similarities that may also mark a combination of coincidence and the determination of self-propelling personalities.

Drawing on archival materials I’ve worked through at both the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) and Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania, I discovered and began to untangle a biopic narrative of Roth that at times resembled Adams’ own *Education*.

A few of these similarities include:

- 1) Both were named Henry.
- 2) Both were born same year, 1838.
- 3) Both died same year, 1918.
- 4) Both had paternal grandfathers in federal politics (John Q. Adams was president; Roth's grandfather was a U.S. Representative in 1818).
- 5) Both went to private men's schools in the early 1850s.
- 6) Both went to college and studied roughly the same things (though this was common back then).
- 7) Adams wasn't the best student, but got to give the Class Oratory over a better student, creating a slight controversy, while Roth WAS the best student, and was denied the Class Oratory over a lesser qualified student!
- 8) Both were deeply affected by the Civil War.
- 9) Both were interested in the role and meaning of education in the American context.
- 10) Both were among the political or religious elite of their day and traveled extensively;
- 11) Both were professors: Adams at Harvard, Roth at Thiel and CLTS.
- 12) Both spent time in Chicago during the World's Fair of 1893.

The classicist and American historian Garry Wills writes, in his deft historiography *Henry Adams and the Making of America*, that Adams' methodology of historical archival research was quite novel, and in fact ground breaking, in its time. Wills notes that, in no little part, Adams' privilege as a man of money and high-ranking family politics gave him the opportunity to literally get access to some of the most concealed, yet remarkable, historical, political, and military archives in Europe—an opportunity not open to just any person, not even top scholars. Adams would read and immerse himself in primary documents related to the early republic, to battles and wars, to all things Americana and inter-Americana. This historical archival approach was, in many ways, far more extensive than anything such luminaries as Gibbons or Leopold von Ranke (cf. *The Footnote*, by A. Grafton) had produced in their own luminous academic lives (Wills, 2005).

But Adams did many things of note that are greatly important to this present discussion. We must recognize Adams as the preeminent archival historian. In many ways, it is Adams' own investigative scholarship, as well as his construction of the academic seminar on American soil and the promotion of such specialized archival research, that has had profound and lasting influence on the writing and ultimate understanding of history. For us, his work is foundational for conducting research that we now embark upon, and for influencing how we construct our own narrative histories about the history of theological education, culled and clarified from the tangled netting of primary sources—receipts, letters, minutes, books and marginalia, journals, speeches, poems, newspaper clippings, and more. The work of Henry Adams plays into the very investigative historiography that I have conducted (as librarian and scholar) today: the result of one Henry's dynamic and creative approach to historical methodology in the nineteenth century now gives rise to the illumination of another Henry's dynamic and creative approach to spiritual formation, pedagogy, and theological learning in the nineteenth century, and how those elements translated into the construction, development, and sustainability of a theological institution.

The second point about Adams, and perhaps the more important one, is that of his being the author of *The Education of Henry Adams*, where he takes on his own life through invention and re-invention, by detailing his experiences as an educated (or nearly educated!) individual throughout his life. The reference to *Education* is at times quite sarcastic. The ways in which Adams speaks about “education” or “what is education” come off as strident put-downs of the academic life as mere schooling in its basest and lowest unworthy form. Writing in the third person about his own life, Adams would often make the most scathing and derisive comments about so-called education when he referred to his college years, with slighting comments like “Four years of Harvard College, if successful, resulted in an autobiographical blank, a mind on which only a water-mark had been stamped” (Adams, 43). Another: “...he could never feel sure that Harvard College had more than reflected a weakness. In his opinion the education was not serious, but in truth hardly any Boston student took it seriously...” (Adams, 49).

Instead, Adams would invoke a different set of lexical terms to convey his sensitivity to education, like “landscape education” and “accidental education” (Adams, 68). But it is in the education of life and experiences, many of them “accidental,” that Adams draws upon his ideas for pedagogy and teaching in general, as he famously remarked about magisterial antiquity in Italy: “Rome dwarfs teachers” (Adams, 72). Yet, perhaps one of his most “educational” moments would come with a short encounter with the Italian patriot Garibaldi, on the eve of his assault on the yet-divided Italy in 1860 (Adams, 73-74). Garibaldi was, possibly, an incarnate image of intellectual intensity married to revolutionary praxis and action.

A parallel example in regard to Henry Warren Roth was the Rev. William Passavant, the churchly benefactor of dozens of philanthropic ventures, from hospitals to orphanages to seminaries, and arguably Roth’s most influential spiritual mentor. Early in Roth’s career, while he was still a teenage student in rural western Pennsylvania, we find entries in Roth’s diary (from the early 1850s) noting where he’d met Passavant for lunch or coffee to discuss matters of the day, as well as Roth’s own future in the ministry.

While Adams was attempting, even after a half century, to come up with a compelling and authentically understandable definition of “education” through a stylistically novel third-person memoir, Roth, too, was reviewing what “theological education” was, had become, and should be. For Roth, these were the actions in life—the practice, the travel, the teaching, and a commitment to church and Christ, through a certain set of morals—that determined “what theological education was.” Sentimentality, thus, may be only the feelings that remain in both men about their ultimate reflections on the education they either received or experienced in life and later enacted in their teaching.

Types of History: History and “Verso History”

The Henry Warren Roth Papers are a rich collection of materials, not just in the breadth of their apparent completeness but in the unique portrait that may be drawn from their contents, from correspondences illuminating the spiritual formation and development of a seventeen-year-old Henry Roth in the 1850s, to his cross-country travels into the Colorado Territory and beyond as a thirty-six-year-old preacher, all the way to the end of his days in 1918, when he died of pneumonia in Greenville, Pennsylvania. The collection is as much a history of America as it is a biography of a man and a history of Lutheran education, and even education in general, in nineteenth-century America. In fact, among the many papers in the HWR

Collection is a manuscript essay entitled “The Importance of the Study of Latin,” in which the unknown writer (perhaps one Ernest E. Rhoads—a distant relative, whose name was changed from the original “Rothe” and pronounced “Rote”) begins by saying: “This is doubted in our little [...] age. My boy does not intend to talk Latin. It is only a waste of time. It will not help him in business. He can not [sic] plough any better on account of it. No money in it.”

There is much, though, that can be gleaned from the writings, as well as the ephemera of the Roth collection. His innumerable newspaper cuttings, which at first glance appear like a rubbish pile of old worthless yellowing paper, yield more than just *old* information. Instead, they are a glimpse into his devotion to the church and his particular branding of Lutheranism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as well as a sociological portrait of the era in Chicago.

This world is gleaned from many of the verso portions of these yellowed newspaper cut-outs and presents us with interesting social histories of the time—these “verso histories,” as I’ll call them, include: a) a brief article on proper dressing on Sundays; b) a mention in 1902 of German military engagement in Venezuela during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency; and c) a discussion of female composers in Chicago in the late 1890s giving a performance somewhere in the downtown area. (We even find burrito recipes in some of these newspapers around 1910!)

I present these as details that may appear tenuous to Henry Warren Roth, but as events that may muster a truer portrait of a time, a contextualizing of H.W. Roth’s America (or “Americas”) by way of painting the portrait that his contemporaries were offering through newsprint in quotidian events.

A Life Outlined: Henry Warren Roth (1838-1918)

Unlike Henry Adams, Henry Warren Roth produced little in the way of sizable published works. There are no known books, simply a smattering of undocumented articles and unpublished sermons. Adams produced novels and other significant works, while Roth focused his writing talents on the areas of homiletics, poetry, and education, often in the form of public oratory. Perhaps both men did see some chance of recasting themselves and their legacy through their own inventions, but Adams was clearly the more concerned and crafty about it, whereas Roth left his voluminous legacy to uncertainty in the form of wooden trunks stuffed with books, letters, and diaries. The better comparison, then, might be between Roth and his fellow scholar and colleague at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Dr. Revere Franklin Weidner, the first president of the seminary. Weidner produced widely, and often collaborated with famed Biblical scholar William Rainey Harper (1856-1906), who served as first president of the University of Chicago. Though Weidner was more prolific in his publications than Roth, the archival trails of Roth are longer, deeper, and perhaps more significant, especially when it comes to recognizing spiritual formation and pedagogical development of theological education in the nineteenth century.

The late professor Robert H. Fischer, the only scholar to have studied and acknowledged HW Roth for his legacy, was instrumental in securing the Roth archives from Roth’s daughter, Met, in the 1960s. Fischer once noted in a short article about Roth and his mentor, William Passavant, the curious lacuna of Roth in the annals of American Lutheran history, specifically drawn (or erased) by Passavant’s zealous follower and biographer, Gerberding. Fischer writes:

“Perhaps the most tantalizing of all is Gerberding’s studied neglect of the importance of Henry Warren Roth. A single tepid half-page acknowledgement (p. 599) and a few other mentions of the name scarcely hint that for over thirty years this man (HWR) was probably Passavant’s most intimate associate, as well as the first president of Theil..., trusted business agent for many of Passavant’s beloved institutions, the professor at Weidner’s side when Passavant’s Chicago seminary was launched, and the man called in to give the address on Passavant’s life work at his funeral. The neglect of Roth by Gerberding can only be deliberate” (Fischer, 28-29).¹

This said, we begin with HW Roth and his family, dividing his world into periods for a better understanding of who he was and from where he came. We will look at Roth from his forebears all the way to his time in Chicago; even though he did not end his career at the Chicago Lutheran seminary, it was his crowning achievement in theological education. After his departure from the seminary in 1897, his interest and writings on education did not cease, as can be seen from a history of education which he delivered on June 14, 1900, entitled “Butler County’s First Half Century of Schools,” prepared for Butler County’s Centennial in western Pennsylvania. And, even later, as an elder statesman in Greenville and Thiel College, he remained active in the lives of its young students until his death in 1918.

Forebears of HW Roth (pre-1838)

The patriarch of the Roth family in America was a man named Johann Rothe (1726-1791), whose life we find in an old six-page memoir written by himself in German shortly before his death. This elder Rothe, whose name eventually transformed from Johann Rothe to John Roth, and who was respectfully addressed as “Reverend Brother,” was still ministering to a congregation of the Evangelical Brethren Church in York, Pennsylvania, at the time of his death at age 65. He was born on Feb. 3, 1726 in the small town of Sarmund, in Mark-Brandenburg (Prussia), was reared in the Lutheran faith, and trained in the lock-making tradition of his father. Johann took a congregation of the Brethren’s Church in Neusaltz in November 1748, where he remained for some eight years. In July 1756, he went to the colonies in America, where he settled in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. A few years afterward, in 1759, he received a call to serve among the “Indians,” which he did for some time, becoming versed in native languages and traditions. For the next fifteen or so years he pursued this calling, while marrying, in that time, a young German widow named Maria Agnes, and rearing some nine children. Between 1774 and his death in 1791, Johann (now John) held a congregation in York, with an occasional service to congregations in eastern Pennsylvania, including Mount Joy, Emmaus, and Hebron (from Record of J. Roth, Moravian Church, York PA).

This elder Rothe/Roth was the father of Johann David Roth (1775-1859), who served in the War of 1812 as a colonel and later served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives,

¹ After the presentation of this paper in Chicago on June 11, 2011, an audience member asked what reason Gerberding might have had for neglecting HWR and his contributions. I am not completely clear about an explanation, but perhaps a debatable point, in distinction from Prof. Fischer’s assessment, would be to note that HWR’s publishing house, The Young Luther Company, published Gerberding’s book. The alternative explanation then, would suggest that Gerberding didn’t want to be too obsequious to his colleague, who happened also to be his publisher of the Passavant biography. It is possible that HWR would have felt uncomfortable with publishing a volume that touted his significance, instead opting for a more downplayed and humble short paragraph about himself.

from 1818-1820. He'd kept up the family trade of lock- and blacksmithing learned a century earlier in Germany, and used it as an occupation he shared with his own sons working at the government arsenal in Harpers Ferry after 1821. One of his sons was Lewis Roth (1812-86), who married Lydia Beuchle (1811-1898). This union produced nine children; three of his five boys were headed for the ministry, including Henry Warren. Without further genealogical confusion, let us proceed to our principal character and his early life.

Birth, Childhood, and Adolescence (1838-1857)

Early in Martin Van Buren's presidency in 1838, a young woman of 27, Lydia Roth (nee Beuchle), gave birth to her first set of twins in early April—April 5, to be exact. The infant screams of a boy and a girl shrilled through windows of the Roth home in rural Pennsylvania, across meadows and through the not-yet-blossoming trees. Only three weeks later, the little girl would succumb to malaria and be placed in the earth just after April 25. The solitary twin, a boy named Henry Warren, would grow to be the elder brother of seven others, and mentor his siblings for more than three-quarters of the next century.

Catherine Marietta “Met” (1839-1881), George Washington (1842-1861) and his twin sister Louisa Sidney (1842-1874), David Luther (1847-1935), John Milton (1850-1934), Theophilus Beighley (1853-1937), and Lewis Melancthon “Lank” (1858-1949) Roth were the seven younger siblings to the elder Henry. And, although he never had children of his own, he took his younger sister Met's daughter as his own (also called “Met”) when his sister died shortly after childbirth.

As a child, Roth excelled in school, garnering various school merits and awards from his teachers, many of which are extant in our archival collections dating back to the mid-1840s when Henry was seven or eight years old. After a few years of school (in Prospect), Henry, at the age of fourteen, was sent off to Bethlehem, clear across the state to eastern Pennsylvania. It is around this time, in 1852, that he begins to write his journal. On August 15 of that year, the fourteen-year-old writes, “Arrived in Bethlehem with my . . . Aunt Betsy and Uncle Philip . . .” The next year, we see his first return to Prospect. “October 15, 1853: Returned to Prospect after 14 months at Mr. B. VanKirk's Boarding School for Young Gentlemen. I boarded at Uncle Henry's on the same street.” Over the next few years, starting at the age of fifteen, he began teaching children at local schools. His first stint in 1853 lasted four months at \$18 per month (\$470 in today's terms); his next also at four months, but with a slight raise to \$20 per month (\$520 today); the following year, starting October 29, 1855, Henry had a six-month term in Hecla, Pennsylvania at a fairly comfortable \$33 per month (\$780.00 today). In this third teaching arrangement, we find the most significant writing of the young HW Roth, at the early age of seventeen, which deals explicitly with social education and pedagogy. In the archival materials, we find a small hand-written “newspaper” produced for the instruction of children. Though the work, aptly titled *Hecla Times: Devoted to Instruction and Amusement*, does not have a signed author, it surely bears the stylistic mark of HW Roth. So, too, the first installment matches up with Roth's time in Hecla (a very small non-incidental town northwest of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania), just three months into his tenure there, when surely he needed some novel amusement for his students. What is significant is his honesty and acuity to what education is and should be in antebellum America, as written by a seventeen-year-old with eyes on the ministry.

As a nation, we are perhaps more highly blessed with good common schools, than any other in the world . . . The good that arises from these schools to our country, is immense. Good teachers + houses are provided for all, yet some complain, that it costs so much to receive an education, even when these are at their disposal, free of charge. [. . .] Our time is precious, + you may be sure, that if you waste it now, you will regret it as long as you live. (*Hecla Times*, Vol. I, No. 1—Jan. 18th, 1856)

In this and the few other manuscript “issues” of the *Hecla Times*, the entries are decidedly morality poems (like “The Spider and the Fly”) or serial stories (like “Little Maggie, or Doing Good One Day”). The final line here, too, rings with Roth’s own industriousness and example of “not wasting time.”

After completing his time at Hecla on April 18, 1856, Henry attended some local duties in Passavant’s hometown of Zelenople (named after Passavant’s own mother), which is located not far from Prospect. On June 29, he was confirmed in Prospect by Rev. A.H. Waters. When the summer and fall had ended, Henry took up his final academic duties before college, at the Connoquenessing Academy from Nov. 18, 1856 till April 15, 1857, at which date he had the valedictory. In the meantime, it appears, he was also working as a teacher until he resigned under unclear conditions in February of 1857. But, no matter what the situation, Henry always seemed to be studying, always learning, as is evident from his journal after his secondary schooling had been completed in April. He promptly began his collegiate studies little more than a month later, and on his first day in Gettysburg at Pennsylvania College on May 26th of that year he notes: “Cannot study as I would desire . . . Wet day. Picked beans this afternoon.” And so began his years of serious study.

Pennsylvania College and Western Theological Seminary (1857-1865)

Boarding at the seminary during his first year, HW began his studies well, from what we know, but had to quit midyear in February due to ill health. He resumed later in 1858. It’s at this time that we begin to find interesting and relevant historical references in Roth’s journals, including one from August 6-9, 1858, which simply reads “Atlantic Cable Laid.” The young scholar and preacher was beginning to get his feet wet in the lecture hall and pulpit, which we find noted frequently throughout his journals. “Spoke at Prospect and Zelenople,” one entry reads. Along with major events, though, we find notes about the simplicity of daily living in the college dormitory, such as when he speaks of the stove in his room or when, on a cold February in 1859, he wrote, “Tried to darn my stockings.” He also wrote on more serious events in his journal, such as when he noted his first opportunity to vote against slavery in 1859.

During his years at college, H.W. Roth experienced a whole number of events that would alter and affect the course of his education and life. He did not simply attend language classes in German and Latin, for which he garnered excellent grades, or history and literature, but joined clubs, made friends (June 1st, 1859: “J. Sarver is my ‘chum.’”), attended and conducted prayer meetings, taught Sunday school, met with Passavant over coffee, made pastoral visits to the Poor House, and traveled as a delegate of the Pittsburgh Synod to Louisville, Kentucky. In July of 1859 he attended a cousin’s wedding in Bethlehem. Back in school during the fall, he was himself making pranks with his “chums.” On Wednesday, Oct. 12, 1859, his journal reads:

“Had a jolly time this evening setting up Jim Mc[Goron’s] buckwheat. Reub..., Jim Kennedy, Andy Spear, Dr. Richardson, George + myself Blakely came out + chased us with their guns. Billy had arranged it with me. The boys did run beautifully.” Amid the fun and games, his grandfather Roth died at 85 on November 6th, and HW notes it solemnly in his journal, pasting the elder’s obituary into the small pages.

During this period, from late 1859 until 1861, HW Roth was close to his brother George (Washington Roth), whom Henry had been guiding into the Christian faith. Earlier, in September of 1859, George was at the Mourner’s bench, finding his way to Christ. Daily life went on with HW’s piety (his journals are marked by evocations of “Nearer My God to Thee” on each page during this era); at the same time he described the antics of his classmates tossing boulders and stones from the third storey windows of the college buildings, while absolving himself of any wrong doing or participation in such mischievous acts! He described the introduction of gas (lights) to the college in August 1860. HW notes in passing, in early November of 1860, the drafting of an “African Sunday School,” but it is not clear what he means here. He speaks of accidents, records his weight (144 ½—Jan. 4, 1861) and passingly refers to an historic event on April 4th of ‘61—“rumors about Fort Sumter.”

The students, now aware of a “civil conflict,” were brought together in student “guards” to protect against any southern threat. Just two months before his graduation, he notes his status as “Second Lieut. of Co. of students” in the “Pa. College Guard” (June 4, 1861). But perhaps the biggest lesson (and disappointment) of Roth during his college years was the appointments of the class oratory, for which he was passed over. A rebellion was led, and his dissatisfaction brought HW to “take no part [in] commencement” (Aug. 14). Several letters exist surrounding this controversy, including letters between HW and his father, as well as the head of the school and appointments. The matter was eventually resolved to HW’s satisfaction, but not that year.

Before heading off to seminary in Pittsburgh the next year, HW passed the summer roasting ears of corn with friends and pigeon hunting in Monroe and Carbon Counties in eastern Pennsylvania (Aug. 23; Sept. 12). But it was at the end of September that he came to a point in his education that he might not have expected. Home on Sept. 25th to Prospect for a short spell, within the week he found his younger brother George had enlisted, on October 1, and was preparing to head off to Camp Orr near Kittanning, Pennsylvania. HW promptly took the horse carriage out and drove young George to Zelenople, where he’d shuttle off to camp. Two weeks later, George was in Camp Wilkins, Pittsburgh (Oct. 14), and on the 18th, was on a boat far down the Ohio with his regiment. By the 29th, George was in Hardin Co., Kentucky. Meanwhile, in November, HW lectured and preached in Birmingham, Pennsylvania, and began Hebrew studies at the seminary in Allegheny with Dr. Clark (Nov. 27).

On December 3rd, HW received news that George was ill and started off to see him. Three days later, he found his brother in camp and stayed with him. HW preached to the company of a Captain Jack (presumably his brother’s unit) on December 8th. Four days later, on December 12, HW wrote an entry in his journal: “George died in Christ.” That week (December 16th) he headed home to inform his family of George’s death.

The following February (1862), HW gave his first sermon at home, on Psalm 90:12. He preached more in the coming months, and visited Pittsburgh a few times. On September 22, the day before he matriculated at Western Theological Seminary and noted that he

would take Hebrew, Church History, but NOT Dogmatic Theology, he wrote in his journal, “Emancipation Proclamation.”

He traveled more in the next year (1863), and in June, Rev. Passavant recommended HW for licensure in the Pittsburgh Synod, which he was afforded on June 9th, for one year. It was in this same week that anxiety rose around Pittsburgh as Confederate forces were making their only close approach to Pittsburgh during the war, and which the city was actively fortifying itself against. On October 8th, Passavant celebrated his forty-second birthday with the young Roth over dinner. A few days later, HW went to Gettysburg, where he’d been a student, and meditated over the ground that now lay blood-stained and hallowed.

By June of 1864, HW was finishing up his seminary work on homiletics, and beginning more regular preaching duties. His travels would begin more in earnest to places like Chicago, where he first visited in October of 1864. In fact, HW made at least three visits to pre-fire Chicago in the 1860s, and, on this first visit, preached in Pederson’s Norwegian Church during his second day. That same day he met the famous Dwight Moody and addressed members of his Sunday School. In less than eight months, he’d be ordained, and the world as this young American knew it would change irrevocably.

Ordination, Travels, and Morality (1865-1870)

HW celebrated his birthday at home on April 5th of 1865. On the 14th, president Lincoln was assassinated. The shadow of this act was still cast upon the nation, when, on June 2nd, HW was ordained into the Lutheran Church under the hands of Revs. Passavant, Waters, and others. The text that was preached was Ezekiel 33: 30-33. Soon after, delegations for synodical work brought HW to Ohio, Indiana, and Chicago, where he worked among orphans and the sick. In October of 1865, Roth was appointed a member of the Education Committee of the Synod, which furthered his credentials in theological education.

We find in his effects several small *vademecums*, or notebooks, from this time, with newspaper clippings glued into the pages. These clippings are moralistic and portray the ills and vices of the day—disobedience, adultery, sloth, drunkenness, murder. The books are well worn, showing that he must have carried them obediently in his pockets, and date from around 1865 till about 1869. His model of moral upstanding was very important and he was sure to maintain this fact. At the end of this decade, in 1869, Roth began lecturing more frequently, and on March 11th and April 20th of that year, he gave a well-attended talk entitled “Protestantism a Failure!” at Kittanning. Besides the attention given to a high morality and dissatisfaction with contemporary religious practice, he makes note of giving greater attention to physical work—both in April and August of 1869, he specifically mentions digging drains and post holes at a parsonage in Pennsylvania. But in the fall, his attention is on other, bigger things. In October he was elected trustee at the nascent Thiel College, and in November he was back in Chicago for General Council.

Thiel College and Travel Writing (1870-1887)

When Rev. Passavant was given \$4,000 by A.L. Thiel to start a college and specialty school, he advertised in his publication “The Lutheran and Missionary” in 1867 for students to come to the newly created and diversely educational institution (Thiel History, Through the Years, Online). In 1870, Roth came in as the school’s first president. This was HW’s first major foray into academic and theological pedagogy at a higher level. The experiment would last for

seventeen years, ending with HW's almost quiet dismissal from the presidency. But local papers in Greenville, Pennsylvania, where Thiel is situated, wrote with passionate outcries about the dismissal of Roth. The town even went so far as to chide the Board of Directors in print for their unwise decision, and then treated HW to a community farewell reception in downtown Greenville. As the *Advance Argus* reported on Sept. 15, 1887, "Dr. Roth Honored—a large meeting of citizens at Laird Opera House tender him a most cordial and pleasant reception." With his departure, he would soon be off to Chicago to take up a parish position, and then, his crowning work in theological education at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary after 1891. Back at Thiel, his younger brother Theophilus would eventually pick up the reins as the college's president a few years later. The Roth brothers' devotion to Thiel must be recognized, especially as they encountered difficulties with the college's board.

Returning to the early period of HW Roth's tenure as Thiel president, we find, perhaps, that his most informative experience came from a cross-country journey he took out west in 1875. In a series of several letters home, entitled "Toward Sunset" and published in the local paper, the *Greenville Argus*, we see a portrait of a serious and thoughtful man, who is at times playful with his observations. Departing from Greenville, Pennsylvania, he headed out as far as Las Animas, in Colorado Territory, passing through several cities along the way. He writes about antiquarian bookshops and seminary "libraries," the charred earth of Chicago four years after the fire, shooting buffalo from a train on the prairies, and the death of two young card players in Dodge City.

In Fort Wayne, he stopped to see an old Lutheran friend, but also visited Siemon Bro.'s antiquarian book store. He writes "These gentlemen have opened out a royal display of old books, such as Bibliophiles love to look at, touch, and smell of . . . We used to feel 'musty' when we visited and enjoyed their rich collection of *Antiquaria*." Roth also stopped at Augustana Seminary, when it was still in Paxton, Illinois, south of Chicago, just before it moved to Rock Island, clear across the state. While there, he observed, "We found men busy packing the fine library, several thousand volumes of which were a donation from the King of Sweden. Here too, old books gladdened our eyes" (from a dispatch on July 24, 1875 in St. Louis).

Roth's observations of Chicago are remarkable, and, to my knowledge, one of the few descriptions to exist of the period after the fire.

"At Chicago, the morning sun greeted our visit to the city, the first since the Great Fire . . . we visited Dearborn and N. Clark where once stood the "Church of Mercy" and the "Deaconess Hospital." Fine residences have been erected, trees planted, many workmen are even now busy, repairing the side-walks and paving the streets, yet tottering walls and charred logs and blackened, rubbish-filled squares tell of the Past and bear full witness to the fiery deluge which swept the helpless city..." (Roth, 1875).

The rest of his trip kept the memory of a still-battered Chicago. In St. Louis he commented on the people in the streets, while out in Dodge City he remarked on a wealthy merchant who'd dug an earth home into the banks of the Arkansas River and lived there with his family far away from society, but with coffers full of hundreds of thousands of dollars! His most

exciting moment appears to be an experience on a train, where they encounter buffalo and slow to shoot and kill one. "Pop, Bang, Whizz!" he writes, then describes the full carriage of men jumping off and running toward their hunting trophy. But such enthusiasm is snuffed out by his later experience of human death in Dodge City. Before his return home, he writes about the West in very clear terms:

The pistol is the most speedy settler of difficulties; specially in these drunken quarrels. Nearly every man carries a revolver or two, some place about his person. The ranch-men, cattle-drivers, &c., have a large navy six shooter at their side or back, suspended in a belt. The handle of a convenient knife is often visible.

Only a short time since two men quarreled over a game of cards. One accused the other of cheating ... the other retorted with the lie. «Are you heeled?» said the first. «No,» was the reply. «Here are two pistols, each is loaded, take your choice.» . . . A pistol was taken, there was a simultaneous report and two men more were placed in the rough hill side above Dodge City.

We visited this burial place. Mike Brinn, aged -2, we could decipher on a broken board at the head of a grave. Into another grave was driven a rough piece of a broken scantling. Another was marked by a wagon spoke to which there yet clung one of the felloes of the wheel, of which it had formerly been a part. The rest were unmarked. It was said concerning this row of the buried, that not one had died a natural death; all having had their lives ended by violence.

We picked up a large rifle-ball that had been flattened as it struck the rock, near these unmarked graves, and carried it away as a memento of the sad, sad burial place near Dodge City. (Roth, 1875)

With this, he returns home, educated in a new way from the perils of travel and the real, gritty world of the west. After this trip, that Thanksgiving at 10 a.m., he delivered an address at the Lutheran Church in Greenville on the "Nation's Responsibilities," surely informed by his experiences that year (*Greenville Argus*, Thur. 25 November, 1875). Equipped with his tools of ministry, he moves forward at Thiel for the next decade before moving on to Chicago, where he would make his greatest mark in theological education.

Chicago: Pastoral Work, Theological Education, and Mission (1887-1897)

After his departure from Thiel in 1887, Roth was off to Wicker Park, on the north side of Chicago, to minister a church, which he would do for the next few years. The seminary that he and Passavant would create was in that very neighborhood when it first opened its doors, built on the land that Wrigley Field now occupies. By the time Roth left for Chicago, he was already in high demand as a pedagogue of theological education, and was invited to deliver the inaugural address at Wartburg in 1889. Back in Chicago, he was working assiduously on his next step in pastoral and educational work.

Roth was instrumental in the financial development of the seminary, and often came up with creative fund-raising solutions. During the 1893 World's Fair, for example, the Chicago

Lutheran Theological Seminary (CLTS) created a “Lutheran Seminary cafe,” while the seminary doubled as a hotel for visitors coming to the Fair. Roth himself only managed to go to the fair during its very last week, in October, which he notes in his diary, commenting that a dark cloud hovered over it because, near the last day, the mayor of Chicago, Carter Harrison, Sr., was assassinated. Nonetheless, the venture had some success. The modes of fund raising continued, and in the first decades of the seminary seminarians, too, were sent out in brigades to raise money on behalf of the institution.

The real practical challenge in theological education at the time was developing a sustainable financial strategy. The intellectual “teaching-learning” challenge of theological education for Roth and his colleagues would be how to translate their own life’s work, education, and experiences to a new seminary in Chicago. Instituting “Campus Days” for seminarians to clean and repair the new seminary was reminiscent of the days when Roth and his “chums” had to build stone walls during their college days in Gettysburg.

As for the pedagogy and design of the new seminary, memory in those days was still held in high regard, as was rote learning: seminarians in the first decade of the seminary were required to memorize twenty-five Psalms a year. At the beginning, the spiritual formation of the young seminarians was directed by Roth, with a class of six students in the first year. Theological learning took place individually, in groups, and through tutorials with Roth and the other faculty. But learning and education were also practical—students had to do physical work and participate in the community, as well as learning music. The seminary “library” was still not devised as a specific entity within the infrastructure, and with so few students at first, the use and borrowing of books was done from the individual collections of each faculty member.

Later Years, Death, Legacy (1897-1918)

After Roth’s retirement from the seminary, when he was near 60, he traveled more, this time to the Canadian west in British Columbia, to seek out fortunes in the mines north of Vancouver. HW Roth also started a company at this time with his Reverend brothers; the company, The Young Lutheran Company, Ltd., which was created “for the purpose of publishing,” issued stock in 1898. Finally back in western Pennsylvania, Roth sought to promote a better understanding of education in his hometown and region, and gave an oration in Butler County regarding the history of its schools over the past century. He worked as the director of the major Passavant institution in Pittsburgh for several years, before settling back into the daily calm of Greenville, Pennsylvania, and living as the grand old man of Thiel College—participating in intellectual discussions with friends, called “The Round Table,” and mentoring the youth of the college and community. Roth also remained active in the Pittsburgh Synod till the end of his life.

In his will, executed after his death in 1918 and found in the Thiel archives, HW Roth directed all of his theological books to be donated to the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary library, plus \$1000 to the library (\$16,000.00 in 2011 dollars)—which would eventually become the JKM library half a century later, and which still contains books belonging to Roth. When HWR was a student, he “catalogued” his books, as, in those days, the role of a librarian was not so distinctly defined. By the time of his death, the profession was still young and slow to grow, but he recognized the bibliographic and scholarly need. Books for the seminary were still housed in the seminary president’s office and adjacent hallways; it was

not until after WWII that a proper library building was constructed at the seminary, by this time situated in Maywood, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.

The meaning of “education,” specifically “theological education,” was something broad for Roth, perhaps what we might call holistic. His contribution comes most prominently in his role as an architect of seminary education, which may have been driven by his own industry and intellect as a young teacher in the 1850s. His attention to financial matters, especially in his youth, equipped him with a talent to seek the benefits of investment, commerce, and business until the end of his life.

What must not be lost is that he defined education as a broad yet compellingly practical enterprise, where there was no fear of mixing Horace with ditch digging or preaching with sweeping the seminary steps or planting vegetables. Education was living and making lessons from hardship, but also providing guidance. And it was a commitment of faith. We likely see his legacy best in his devotion, described in such committed terms as he himself used to end his Butler County address in 1900: “All honor to the faithful sires of the pioneer days; to the devoted teachers who instructed their children & to the host of pupils who reaped to advantage from the good seed though often but roughly & sparsely cast in the days of ‘Auld Lang Syne.’”

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to John Hauser, Thiel College Archivist, whose assistance and expertise on Thiel history, and especially the Roth family, were extremely helpful. I want to thank him for his dedication to these archives, as well as his generous hospitality and taking the time to discuss various topics of history and the life of H.W. Roth.

Bibliography

Primary Sources (Archival)

Greenville Township Cemetery Records.

Roth Archives at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), Chicago. [An unprocessed collection in the Archives at the JKM Library, LSTC]

Roth Archives at Thiel College, Greenville, PA. [A partially processed collection in the Archives at Thiel College Library]

Roth, Henry Warren. “Butler County’s First Half Century of Schools.” (June 14, 1900).

Roth, Henry Warren. Journals, Letters, Papers, and Ephemera. (fl. 1845-1918).

Roth, Henry Warren. “Toward Sunset.” *Greenville Argus*. (Sept. 1875).

Rothe, Johann. *Unpublished Memoir (ca. 1791)*. [Manuscript in York, PA].

Secondary Sources

Adams, Henry. *The Education of Henry Adams: a centennial version*. Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society; Charlottesville: Distributed by the University of Virginia Press, 2007.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

- Fischer, Robert. "New Light on Passavant and His Era," *Lutheran Historical Conference*, 1968.
- Flaubert, Gustave. *L'éducation sentimentale: histoire d'un jeune homme*. Paris: GF, Flammarion, c1985.
- Gerberding, G.H. *Life and letters of W. A. Passavant, D.D.* Greenville, P.A.: The Young Lutheran Company, 1906.
- Grafton, Anthony. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- "Thiel History, Through the Years" (http://www.thiel.edu/about_thiel/monaca.htm).
- Wills, Garry. *Henry Adams and the Making of America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.



Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.