

THE HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN SYNOD
IN DUNN COUNTY, WIS.
THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS (1863 - 1913)

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Only a few miles south of I-94 just east of Menomonie, Wisconsin lies a small and apparently nameless cemetery. The cemetery has no fence or gate in the front and the first row of tombstones is perhaps a hundred feet from the gravel town road which passes by. Between the cemetery proper and the road the turf rises slightly but then descends as one walks past an old hand pump. For all practical purposes this old pump and the cemetery behind it are the only visible remains of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iron Creek, a now "extinct" congregation of the Wisconsin Synod according to a history of the Western Wisconsin District.¹ In the early morning hours of October 27, 1949, a fire completely destroyed the church building and virtually all of the congregation's records with it. On April 1, 1950, the congregation itself officially disbanded, with most of the members joining St. Paul's in Menomonie.²

For most people this is not such a great tragedy, since no one was hurt by the fire and the former members found other churches to join. Yet it is a great tragedy in the sense that the bulk of the congregation's history went up in flames. But wasn't it just another little rural congregation of dubious significance? Well, not quite. The few bits and pieces of St. John's history that do remain suggest that this church was a vibrant, loving church with at least an admirable beginning. Moreover, "Iron Creek" (as it will be designated from this point on) appears to have been the first congregations of the Wisconsin Synod in northwestern Wisconsin. From this church, directly or indirectly, sprang up a number of other Wisconsin Synod churches in the area. It is to this Iron Creek "family" of churches that this study will be devoted. However, the study will be limited in two ways. First, it will cover only about the first fifty years of the Wisconsin Synod's work in Dunn County. This is not because the time after it is unimportant, but because we want to focus more on the formation and early development of these churches. Secondly, it will try to concentrate on people, specifically some of the pioneer pastors and laymen who gave so much of their time and effort and love to their respective congregations. After

all, God's church is not merely a list of names, dates and statistics, but flesh-and-blood souls with their own unique personalities and backgrounds. That is really the point of this little paper. Young pastors are urged to leave their "ivory tower" offices and to get to know the members of their congregation on a personal basis so those members don't appear only as nameless faces on a Sunday morning. Should we treat "those who have gone before us" any differently? Or do we assume we have nothing to learn or imitate from Christians who lived over a century ago? This writer certainly hopes not.

St. John's -- Iron Creek (1863 - 1950)

One of the few pieces of information we have about this church comes from the Golden Jubilee booklet of St. Katherine's Evangelical Lutheran Church, a daughter congregation. A pastor struggling to keep his little mission congregation afloat would probably give anything to have a church that began the way Iron Creek did. What a tragedy that it had to end the way it did. Joseph Peckmiller, a charter member of that first church writes:

A traveling missionary of the Wisconsin Synod by the name of Muldaehnke came from Watertown to Iron Creek in June, 1863. He served the Lutheran Christians in the surrounding territory with the means of grace. Preparations were immediately made to erect a church and parsonage. Everyone gave as his love to the Lord prompted him and soon the buildings were completed. In September of 1864, Rev. Traugott Gensike became the first resident pastor of the little flock. In the same month a constitution was adopted.³

Evidently things happened quickly in those days. There was no spending years waiting and wondering if services would be held in something more permanent than a hotel reception room or a dance studio. Nor does it sound like St. John's had to mount a huge debt retirement drive or a GO'63 outreach campaign. This is not to say every WELS mission congregation today is in a struggle for survival or that life at the little church in Iron Creek was always a breeze. But as short as the preceding account is, it certainly captures the enthusiasm of those early Lutheran settlers.

So what did they have to be enthusiastic about? No doubt some of it had to do with being served by a pastor like Edward Mohldehnke. Unlike many of the so-called "fly-by-night" preachers who passed through the area with their own brand of the gospel, Mohldehnke was a faithful, devoted pastor grounded in God's Word. Yet he was even more than that. Though he was called to be a traveling missionary or "Reiseprediger" for the Wisconsin Synod, he was also called to be the first professor at its new combined college and seminary in Watertown in the fall of 1863. If the words "flexible" and "adept" applied to anyone, they applied to Mohldehnke. Here was a man who had been an excellent student at the German universities of Koenigsberg and Halle as well as an able teacher. Yet it took no prodding to get him away from the podium to travel the frontier backroads of Wisconsin and Minnesota carrying the good news of the Savior to German Lutheran immigrants. Finally, he was also the first editor of the new Gemeindeblatt, forerunner of the Northwestern Lutheran.⁴

What led Mohldehnke to Iron Creek is a mystery. Perhaps he heard about a large concentration of German settlers near Menomonie through correspondence or word of mouth. Another possibility is that the community just happened to be along the way on his travels to Minnesota. Unfortunately even Mohldehnke's "Five Years in America", an account of his journeys through Wisconsin and Minnesota published in Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg's Evangelische Kirchenzeitung, does not provide much of an itinerary. However, in one of his installments he does write about some people by Menomonie who had had trouble with "Albrechtpredigers." These roving preachers were named after Jacob Albrecht, the founder of their denomination, which was apparently an extremist branch of the Methodist Church. Among other things they taught perfectionism and held the Arminian view of conversion. But perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of these Albrechtpredigers was their ability to antagonize those who resisted them. One Albrechtprediger operating in the Menomonie area became such a nuisance to a man that the man gave him a dollar to stay away. Mohldehnke also writes about an immigrant from Mecklenberg he stayed with while at Menomonie who gave him a big

watchdog to take along with him on his wagon. When Mohldehnke asked him the reason, the immigrant told him it was out of fear for the safety of his wagon. Sometime before this some young people had broken an Albrechtprediger's wagon to pieces because they were so enraged by the man's tactics, and now he feared revenge on the part of the "Albrechtsleute." Mohldehnke made a point of condemning such behavior, but admitted that he could understand what brought it about.⁵

Whether either of these immigrants ever became members of Mohldehnke's church is anyone's guess. However, even with the limited translating abilities this writer possesses, it's still apparent that Mohldehnke had a certain way with people which won their confidence. What is more, what he preached was most likely quite nourishing compared to some of the other "preaching" these pioneers had had to endure. Finally, it should not be overlooked that many of the immigrants had grown up in the German state churches, where it was more likely that the people had to come to "Herr Pastor" instead of the other way around. Here was a man concerned enough about their souls to seek them out, even if it meant traveling great distances and sometimes putting up with less than ideal conditions. Of course all of this is speculation, but it makes sense in view of the circumstances of that day.

And so who were some of the immigrants who filled the pews in that first church at Iron Creek? We have already mentioned the name of one. This was Joseph Peckmiller, a charter member who wrote the brief history of the church's first two years we read above. Peckmiller was born in Austria on May 9, 1827, and would live long enough to celebrate his 100th birthday, no small feat even today! In 1852 he emigrated to this country and eventually came to Jefferson County, Wisconsin. Then after working three years in and near Watertown he brought his family to Menomonie in a prairie schooner drawn by oxen. What led him there was the prospect of working for Knapp, Stout and Company, which by the 1870's was said to be the largest lumber corporation in the world.⁶ Like many other counties in northern Wisconsin, Dunn County was heavily forested with white pine and other large conifers. A sign at a rest stop along I-94

in eastern Dunn County says that one log measured about 150 feet long if this writer's memory is correct. Maybe it wasn't the typical size of a tree, but it still gives us an idea what Joseph Peckmiller and other employees were working with in those days.

Some time later Peckmiller bought a little tract of government land near Iron Creek. There among the trees he put up a small log shack into which he moved his family. Meanwhile he continued to work for Knapp-Stout, walking through the woods to and from Menomonie. Finally, after saving a little money, he stopped working for the company and put his efforts into developing his farm. With "great economy and self-denial" he and wife worked to make their little homestead with its log buildings and acres of stumps into a modern, prosperous farm. In many ways this was typical of the lives of immigrants who moved into the area.

Yet each story is a little different. Nearly every immigrant had his own set of circumstances and hardships that made life interesting. Joseph Peckmiller was no different. When he and his family moved to Menomonie, there were still Indians living in the area, and not all were friendly. One day while he was away, some came to his farm and killed a large pig. Then they stole everything they could lay hold of and carry away including his wife's clothesline, household items and a small lamb the Peckmillers had brought with them from Jefferson County. The land that they worked was also far from being in prime condition the first years they were there. It meant clearing and breaking about 300 acres in addition to land that he helped his neighbors develop. One big investment that probably helped him in this line of work was a team of horses, but apparently his horses had to be just the right kind. In 1865 he and his daughter went by train to Missouri to buy his first team. Then the two rode them back to Wisconsin!?

In 1855, the year the Peckmillers came to Dunn County, another St. John's family arrived at Iron Creek. This was the family of Christian Quilling, an immigrant from Prussia. However, the Quillings came to Iron Creek from a different direction. After immigrating in 1853, the family moved to northern Illinois. Then with four other fam-

ilies they migrated to Henderson, Minnesota, about halfway between Minneapolis and Mankato. But even living near relatives did not satisfy them and soon they were on the move again, this time traveling east into Wisconsin in a wagon drawn by oxen. Tired of traveling and pleased with Dunn County, they bought a wild tract of government land and then immediately began the intense job of developing it into a farm. Like the Peckmillers they would eventually pass the farm down to another generation of the same family. However, there were tragedies, too. Not unlike many other families of that day, the Quillings had several children who died in infancy—one of their five sons and their only two daughters.

The History of Dunn County, Wisconsin describes Christian Quilling this way: "Representing the highest type of pioneer citizenship, he left to his children the priceless heritage of a good name, and his demise was regretted by the many who knew him as a man of honor, just in all his dealings with his fellow men, a good husband and father, and, moreover, a Christian gentleman, for both he and his wife were devout members of the German Evangelical Church."⁹ Cooper Publishing Company had to sell its books, but its description is still probably not an exaggeration.

The Peckmillers and the Quillings are examples of families who were at Iron Creek during the first years of the church. Others would come a few years later. One of these latecomers was Henry Wagner, an immigrant from Mecklenburg, Germany. At age 21 he also first settled in Jefferson County. But before coming north, he would go south with Company E of the Fifth Wisconsin Infantry, part of the famous Iron Brigade. A veteran of Spotsylvania, Gettysburg and Antietam, he was fortunate to survive the Civil War unharmed. After returning to Watertown and marrying Mary Harden, a fellow Mecklenburg immigrant, he came to Dunn County. However, unlike the Peckmillers and the Quillings, he tried renting land to make ends meet. After living in Dunn County for three years, he moved to Jackson County, Minnesota where he "proved up" a land claim. There he stayed five years until grasshoppers destroyed his crops. Then he moved back to Dunn County in 1876. Finally, after nine more years of renting and

moving, he and Mary bought their own farm.

Like Joseph Peckmiller and others, Henry Wagner had a sense of civic duty. He served as a member of the town board and subsequently the county board besides a four year term on the local school board. Another characteristic of the time was to also have a child who would eventually marry a child from another prominent family in the same congregation, and again Henry Wagner was no exception. He and Mary had a daughter who married a son of Joseph and Anna Peckmiller.⁹

The three families just described are only a few examples of immigrants who at one time were members of St. John's in Iron Creek. But unfortunately no membership list of St. John's exists today, at least to this writer's knowledge. The cemetery at the site of the old church obviously yields many names, but most of those names do not appear in the History of Dunn County, Wisconsin volume. Some of them are the names of distant relatives, one a third cousin who was killed in a train wreck in Missouri. His widow was left to raise five children, a difficult task even today. Other stones in the cemetery have names that are illegible because they are so old. A few grave sites have no stones at all because either the families could not afford them or because they felt no need for them. In other cases perhaps the stones just simply were moved or spirited away. We rejoice though that God knows those mysteries.

Maybe the most heartening thing about the cemetery at St. John's, however, is a headstone which lies near the middle of the cemetery. On it are not the names of immigrants, but the names of an American Indian family who became members. In an age where prejudice and injustice were even more prevalent than they are today, it is a wonderful tribute to this church. Unfortunately this writer forgot their names in the excitement.

Another commentary on the spirit of this little church are two "chronicles" which survived the fire because they became part of St. Katherine's anniversary booklet in 1928. One of these chronicles was recorded by Pastor August Schmidt, the third pastor to serve St. John's. (Incidentally, no information can be found about Pastor Schmidt,

and relatively little is known about Pastor Gensike, the first resident pastor at Iron Creek. An obituary for Pastor Gensike appears in the July 1, 1905 Gemeindeblatt written by his friend Johann Bading, but it says nothing about his work at Iron Creek or any place after it. In Europe he had served in Rotterdam.¹⁰ J. P. Koehler tells us Iron Creek was Gensike's first call after coming to America as a missionary from the Berlin Mission Society.¹¹) The chronicle, dated January 1, 1867, reads:

Charlotte Beyer, wife of the farmer Fredrick Beyer, in Town Red Cedar, Beyer Settlement, member of our congregation was stricken with a serious illness in 1866. The Lord heard her prayer and granted her a complete recovery. Out of thankfulness to the true Physician above, she donated to the Ev. Luth St. John's Congregation two beautiful lamps at Christmas time. May the Lord bless the cheerful giver with temporal and spiritual gifts in Christ.

The second chronicle was dated January 1, 1870 and signed by Albert F. Siegler, the fourth pastor to serve Iron Creek. It reads:

Immanuel Galeske donated a crucifix and two candelabra. Price \$21.00. He had made a vow in sickness. The candelabra are to be transferred to Beyer Settlement if in years to come a church will be built there. The Lord remember the donor in all need.¹²

Some of those who were donors for the St. John's building program and signers of its constitution were from little Beyer's Settlement, several miles north of Iron Creek but still a fair distance away. However, as the history of St. Katherine's points out, it is evident especially from the second chronicle that some were entertaining thoughts of having their own church. In 1870, Pastor Siegler conducted the first services for the Beyer's Settlement members in a public schoolhouse and soon the organization of a new church was only a matter of time.

St. Katherine's - Beyer's Settlement (1878 - present day)

Beyer's Settlement remained a preaching station from 1870 till 1878. But the desire to have a "real" church led three men to make a big purchase. In 1876, William Beyer, Charles Cook and H. Knaack, Sr. bought a tract of land alongside the public schoolhouse from Carl Beyer for the sum of \$18.00. Meanwhile Iron Creek and Beyer's

Settlement saw several changes of pastors. A. F. Siegler, an energetic young pastor who over his career would serve scores of other churches and preaching stations, accepted a call to Ridgeville, near Tomah. Replacing him was a Pastor Pohlmann from Durand, a small city about 20 miles south of Menomonie. Siegler and Pohlmann of course did not own cars, but even if they would have, the distance between all the little churches they served would have still been impossible to cover adequately in one day. One writer suggests that three days may have elapsed before they could return home. Two days would be spent in traveling and the other in conducting services.¹³ From 1872 to 1877, a Pastor Althoff then served Beyer's Settlement and Iron Creek, as well as Menomonie, Downsville, Eau Galle and Prairie Farm (as the two previous pastors had done. However, Althoff made his headquarters at St. Paul's in Menomonie in contrast to his predecessors. Unfortunately no other information about Pastor Althoff or Pastor Pohlmann is available. We will hear more about Pastor Siegler later.

In 1877, Candidate Eugen Notz succeeded Pastor Althoff. It was during his short tenure that the preaching station at Beyer's Settlement organized itself as a congregation. The big day was February 9, 1878, a day that the congregation would honor by having it be the date on which it held its annual meeting. Minutes of the annual meetings over the next 50 years showed that the congregation closely adhered to that date. During that first big meeting 24 men signed the church's new constitution, elected a six-man board of elders, decided to build a church building (along with appointing two men to receive donations) and, finally, decided to name their new church, though not necessarily all in that order. Probably the name the church gave itself was the most unusual event of the day, though it might have not seemed to be at the time. The name? The Evangelical Lutheran St. Katherine's Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. To this day St. Katherine's remains one of the most "famous" churches in the Wisconsin Synod, although her claim to fame rests solely on her unusual name. Curiosity-seekers have looked into the history of the name have

been unable to find any specific reason for naming the church after a woman "saint." Some have suggested that Katherine was the name of one of the Beyer girls, but the more plausible theory is that it was named after Martin Luther's wife, Katherine. We will never know.¹⁴

Records show that the sum of \$1,169.00 was collected for the new church. On August 11 of the same year (1878), the church was dedicated "to the service of the Triune God." Dedication sermons were preached by Pastor Notz, his brother Friedrich, a professor at Watertown, and Professor A. Preller, another professor from Watertown. Unfortunately, Pastor Notz soon accepted a call to teach at the Seminary in Milwaukee in 1878. But he was not the last future professor to bless the pulpit of St. John's and St. Katherine's. After several short pastorates by pastors about whom we have little or no information, Pastor August Pieper became the congregation's new shepherd. He began serving the congregation during Lent of 1885. In view of August Pieper's service to the entire Synod during the years to come, it's highly unlikely that the following description of his ministry in Dunn County is overdone.

The members soon held their pastor in love and esteem for he guided them by much instruction, admonition and reproof. With holy zeal and with a burning fire of enthusiasm he grounded them in the true faith of the Word of God and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. And all this was done that God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure should alone have sway. The Lord signally blessed his labors. In the year 1891 Pastor Pieper's activities came to an end by a call to St. Mark's [St. Markus], Milwaukee. With great reluctance did the congregation bow to the will of the Lord to bid farewell to their pastor.¹⁵

Pastor Pieper's successor was no slouch either. In the same year Pastor Martin Eickmann was installed. The beloved future "inspector" of Northwestern College, he served St. Katherine's until 1898. Once again it is not surprising to hear another glowing description of Pastor Eickmann's pastorate at Beyer's Settlement, though one line is a little amusing. "After seven years of self-sacrificing service Pastor Eickmann succeeded in dividing his parish." Of course the context shows that the kind of dividing Pastor Eickmann did was not the kind that sadly occurs in many congregations. What was meant was that he succeeded in separating the large parish

collectively known as "Menomonie" into two separate parishes that were much more manageable. St. Paul's of Menomonie became a parish by itself while St. Katherine's and St. John's formed one joint parish. Each parish would now support its own pastor. The latter arrangement would exist until St. John's disbanded in 1950. Meanwhile, Pastor Eickmann would continue serving only at Menomonie until 1903.¹⁶

One thing that is especially interesting about the different Wisconsin Synod churches in Dunn County is their numerical growth or decline from one decade to another. For example, in the first few years Iron Creek seems to have been the "big" church in the county. But by the end of the century, churches like St. Katherine's and St. Paul's--Menomonie had taken its place. In joint meetings between St. John's and St. Katherine's in 1898 the location of the pastor's residence was discussed. Because St. Katherine's now had the larger membership, it offered to finance and to undertake the construction and upkeep of a parsonage--if the pastor resided at Beyer's Settlement instead of at Iron Creek. Iron Creek consented and the plan went into effect.¹⁷ From the terms of this agreement it would appear that Iron Creek was now taking the so-called backseat.

In 1898, St. Katherine's built its parsonage and together with St. John's called its first resident pastor, George Kirschke of Barron County to the north. He was installed by Pastor Eickmann. Pastor Kirschke was an advocate of Christian day schools, at least for Beyer's Settlement and Iron Creek. Before accepting a call to Nebraska the following year (1900), he turned what later became the parsonage kitchen into a one-room school. Incidentally, the school year at that time was seven months in length.

By March, 1901, the two congregations had a new pastor, E. Stevens. By this time the one-room parsonage school was also too small so that this growing church had to build a 14x20 schoolhouse. The members themselves furnished the labor.¹⁸ But a new generation was doing the building now. Unfortunately Cooper's History of Dunn County, Wisconsin provides the biographies of only a small handful of St. Katherine's

and St. John's members. But it is evident from reading those few that the pioneers of these congregations were being replaced by fulltime farmers and small businessmen. Log shanties and churches were now becoming relics of a glorious past and "modern" buildings were taking their place. Yet the image of finely dressed "German Lutherans" driving to church by horse and buggy on gravel roads instead of trudging through the woods in threadbare "lumberjack" clothes may a bit of a caricature. Even as late as the 1880's there were immigrants moving into the Menomonie area who found work with Knapp, Stout and Company. At that time it was still the largest white pine milling corporation, with 2500 employees, 530,000 acres of pine land and 30,000 acres of Company farm lands.¹⁹ But the pine land of Dunn and surrounding counties was disappearing, so that Knapp-Stout employees were probably engaged more in the kind of work Albert Dehnhoff was doing. After immigrating from Prussia in 1883, he went to work at at Knapp-Stout's Moore Farm, a 3,200 acre farm just a little northwest of Beyer's Settlement. Yet after working there six years he had earned enough to buy his father-in-law's farm. By 1916 he had accumulated 400 acres, a large acreage even today.²⁰ Others like Frank Rose and William Scharlau labored several years at the Kelly Brick Yards in Menomonie before they began to strike out on their own. The story of William Scharlau is especially interesting. After coming with his parents to Menomonie from New York in 1864, he was raised on the family farm. However, he decided to work for Knapp-Stout for twelve years and Kelly Brick Yards for another eight years before realizing that manual labor for others would not get him anywhere. So in 1898, about thirty to forty years after the pioneer days, he decided to buy 40 acres of land and develop it. He made a clearing in the woods, built a log house and a board shed covered with a straw roof, and then began with his wife's assistance to pull stumps and to break the land. By the end of World War I the family had a modern 200-acre dairy farm.²¹

The stay of Pastor Stevens at Beyer's Settlement was ten years. Pastor G. Baum replaced him in November, 1911. Unfortunately, in 1912 the congregation experienced

the divisiveness that afflicts other churches as well. The immediate problem was the construction of a new church, since the old one had become "inadequate." Plans for the new church were accepted at the February 9 annual meeting, but apparently some disgruntled members did not like the proposal to build the new church on the old church property. Their faction left the church and joined the preaching station of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North America in nearby Elk Mound. There they built their own church. Those left behind at St. Katherine's struggled for another year before they decided to build the new church. Even then they decided to build a more "modest" building than the one originally planned, because of the "weakenings in their ranks." The cost was \$6,000 even though much of the labor was freely given and contributions even from the "ladies and young people" were generous. On August 17, 1913 the congregation worshipped in its new church for the first time and then were served dinner in the old one. The old church was later sold for \$150 and dismantled.²² Meanwhile, the new wood frame church of St. John's--Iron Creek was enjoying its 11th year of existence. For its foundation laid in 1902, rocks were carted from the Red Cedar River, seven miles away. In 1925 the same church underwent extensive remodeling.²³

On September 7, 1914, Pastor Herbert Schaller began serving the two congregations. The golden anniversary booklet of St. Katherine's describes congregational life during his ministry there as "quiet" with pastor and congregation working together in "splendid cooperation." Pastor G. Baum had handed in his resignation, which the congregation accepted. Perhaps it is a coincidence, but a Pastor Gustav Baum served at this writer's home congregation for a brief period in the early 1920's. My father, a young boy at the time, remembers him blowing cigar smoke in the ladies' faces, ~~some-~~ especially at the Ladies Aid meetings. One can be certain they did not go home without bringing it to their husbands' attention. Maybe it also has something to do with the little said about his tenure at St. Katherine's.

St. Paul's - Menomonie (1871 - present day)

The shame of St. Paul's was its failure to preserve or record its early heritage. For that reason much of the congregation's history has had to come from secondary sources. However, it is known that pastors Traugott Gensike and August Schmidt held services in Menomonie and most likely Pastor Edward Mohldehnke did, too. Though Iron Creek to the east of the city was the main call, it is hard to believe Pastor Mohldehnke did not do some exploratory work in town. Pastor Mohldehnke's second seminary student at Watertown, Albert Siegler, also worked in Menomonie from 1869 to 1870. Because Menomonie was still a "preaching station", services were held in the homes of members until 1869. But in that year the people joined with Norwegian Lutherans in town to build a church. The dedication of this church on September 19, 1871, elevated the status of St. Paul's from preaching station to organized body, but the official date of the organization is unknown. It is presumed to have been sometime in 1871. However, it is known that the first trustees of the new congregation were Fred Brunn, William Schuette and August Rowe.²⁴ Of the three, William Schuette certainly had to be the most distinguished, if we believe the stirring eulogy History of Dunn County, Wisconsin gives him.

...There were few who did not know him, either personally or by reputation, and by all who knew him he was regarded as what he was—one of the main pillars of the commercial edifice of this community, and a man beloved by many and respected by all. To have won such a position, having started with no greater initial advantages than those possessed by the average immigrant from foreign shores, gives evidence of a character composed of high, manly qualities, and a moral fibre capable of resisting the temptations that have wrecked many a bright and promising career. William Schuette was born in Prussia, Germany, January 24, 1841, and came to this country in 1853 as a boy of 12 years. After a two years' residence in Kane County, Illinois, he moved to Dunn County, where he made his home for the rest of his life. His first employment here was on a farm east of Menomonie [this was at Iron Creek, where he married another Prussian immigrant, Mary Reinecke]. In his work for others he showed that steadfastness of application and whole-hearted devotion to the task at hand that won their confidence and paved the way for his advancement to positions of greater responsibility. In 1865 he became manager of the Moore Farm of 2,500 acres for Knapp, Stout & Company, and so remained for four years. In 1869 that he deserted the

agricultural field for the more congenial one of city business life, forming a partnership with Fred Ursinus which was continued until 1873. He then became associated with Albert Quilling (son of Christian Quilling, whom we met earlier) and the firm of Schuette & Quilling was formed, beginning operations in a small way in the mercantile and banking business, but gradually and steadily increasing the volume of their transactions until the concern was numbered among the largest and most important in the county. This result was accomplished by constant and unswerving attention to every detail by Mr. Schuette and his partner, coupled with an unvarying integrity that inspired confidence and assured credit whenever needed [Albert Quilling was described as having "never lent his aid to any scheme of extravagance, doubtful morality, or otherwise lacking in the elements of honest success"²⁵]. Mr. Schuette's business career extended over a period of nearly 40 years, giving him a wide acquaintance in this part of the state, and wherever he became known his personal character proved an asset to his firm. But at last his health began to fail and he knew that he must soon relinquish active business life and entrust the exacting work of the store and office to others...It was two years later when the end came. Toward the end of January, 1909, the disease from which he suffered took a critical turn, and at 1:30 on Saturday morning, February 27th, of that year, he passed away at his home in Menomonie. It was one of the events that mark the history of a community, the turning of a page in the book of life.²⁶

The eulogy also says that Schuette was an alderman, as well as mayor of Menomonie for two one-year terms from 1882 to 1883. Sometime in his busy career he managed to carry out his work as president of two civic organizations, too. It should not be a surprise then that his funeral was well-attended, with hundreds of mourners.

In 1875, St. Paul's purchased the Norwegian interest in the "German-Norwegian Lutheran Church" with the understanding that the Norwegians could use the building for four more years if necessary. But by 1877 the Norwegians had built their own church. Yet for some unknown reason, St. Paul's moved its church to a new location in the same year. Unfortunately all the records up to 1878 have been lost.

On July 16, 1878, St. Paul's congregation was organized and joined the Wisconsin Synod. In the same year Pastor Eugen Notz, who had served Menomonie for about a year, accepted a call to the seminary. His predecessors at Menomonie had been Pastor Pohlmann of Durand and Pastor C. Althoff, Menomonie's first resident pastor (who served from 1872 to 1877), in addition to the four pastors mentioned earlier. The next two pastors would also have brief stays. Pastor W. C. Jaeger had to resign

after less than one year of service because of poor health and his successor, Pastor F. Fruechtenicht, also stayed for only a few months before resigning. However, Pastor P. Kleinlein served from 1879 until the end of the year 1884. Maybe his longer stay had something to do with the new parsonage built in 1879.²⁷

In St. Katherine's golden anniversary booklet little is said about Pastor Kleinlein except that he "soon gained the confidence of the little band" and that he "labored in grounding the congregation upon the One Foundation which is Jesus Christ."²⁸ In the church at Menomonie, however, things were not so upbeat, at least near the end of his stay. In 1884, about 30 families separated from St. Paul's to organize Friedens or Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Menomonie as the result of a "controversy."²⁹ What that controversy was about is unknown, but the heated battle over the doctrine of election that raged through the Synodical Conference in the early 1880's is a guess. During Pastor Kleinlein's time, St. Paul's opened a Christian day school. Pastor Kleinlein himself was the teacher assisted by his daughter and the school was one room of his new house.²⁹

In January, 1885, August Pieper came to town. The history of his work in the congregation is incredibly brief considering his impact on the entire Synod and at least Iron Creek and Beyer's Settlement. However, it was noted that during his pastorate a new brick church was built for approximately \$12,000, an unusually large amount of money for that day. The old building was remodeled and served as a schoolhouse for about twenty more years. No doubt the congregation's assessment of Pastor Pieper was not unlike that of the two rural congregations above. But in early 1891, the man who would continue to set the ^{doctrinal} tone for the Wisconsin Synod doctrinally accepted a call to St. Marcus in Milwaukee. He was succeeded by Pastor Martin Eickmann.

Martin Eickmann's stay at Menomonie was also momentous, but its description is equally brief. As has been already discussed in the history of St. Katherine's, this was the pastorate in which St. Paul's would form a parish of its own, separate from the joint parish of St. Katherine's-Beyer's Settlement and St. John's-Iron Creek.

This separation took place in 1898. However, Menomonie pastors would serve these two congregations whenever there was a vacancy. Pastor Eickmann stayed at St. Paul's until 1903 when he accepted a call to be the "inspector" at Northwestern College. In October, 1903, Pastor J. H. Schwartz succeeded him.

During Pastor Schwartz's term at Menomonie the schoolhouse (formerly the church) was torn down and a new brick building constructed for about \$3,100. In 1912, the 25th anniversary of the church building was celebrated. In commemoration a 3,000 pound bell was hung in the church steeple inscribed with the word, "To the Glory of God." Pastor Schwartz stayed in Menomonie until 1920.³⁰

So what was the "average" St. Paul's communicant like in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? By paging through History of Dunn County, Wisconsin, a person may find a few biographies of members, but certainly not all of them or even a majority. The few that do appear show us at least some were small businessmen and farmers. Others were even involved in the city's political apparatus as we recently saw in the case of William Schuette. Frank Rowe, the first principal of St. Paul's school (from 1887 to 1904), was also a city clerk. But no doubt many more were ordinary workers employed by companies like Knapp, Stout & Company or Kelly Brick Yard. However, it does not necessarily mean their faith or their love for their Savior was ordinary.

St. John's - Popple Creek (1884 - present)

When St. John's of Iron Creek disbanded in 1950, St. Katherine's at Beyer's Settlement still had another "creek" as a partner in the faith. In 1922, St. John's of Popple Creek joined the first two churches to form one parish. Today this church can still be found on Highway 64 northeast of Menomonie.

The first services of St. John's were conducted in 1884 by Pastor P. Kleinlein, a pastor we met earlier and one we will also meet later. These took place in the homes of members until 1899 when they were conducted in the Popple Creek School. The Popple Creek School served as the congregation's church until 1914 when a "traditional"

church was built. It is interesting to note that not only members donated money for its construction but also many non-members, neighbors and village businessmen from nearby Colfax. A grand total of \$3,268 was collected and dedication services were conducted on October 18, 1914, with Pastor A. Boer of Bloomer as minister. But Boer and his predecessor were not Wisconsin or even Missouri Synod pastors. From 1904 to 1922 this little church belonged to the Iowa Synod.

In the years following Pastor Kleinlein's pastorate, pastors from Cameron (a small town south of Rice Lake in Barron County) and Eagleton (a small town near Bloomer in Chippewa County) served the congregation. These included the following: Pastor Oswald Lugenheim (Cameron), Pastor Shalve (Eagleton), Pastor Radke (Eagleton) and Pastor John Freund (Cameron). Under Pastor Freund the congregation was organized in 1894. Then Pastor George Kirschke from Bloomer and Pastor Henry Abelmann from Prairie Farm (in southern Barron County) conducted services. All were Wisconsin Synod pastors. But in 1904 the congregation, under Pastor Abelmann, became divided over a form of practice. What that form of practice was is unknown to this writer. At any rate, part of the congregation joined the Iowa Synod while the other part stayed with the Wisconsin Synod. Finally, when Pastor Lanzer of the Iowa Synod was chosen to lead the congregation, the Wisconsin Synod was abandoned and the church was reunited.³¹ Unfortunately this writer was unable to investigate the congregation's decision to abandon the Iowa Synod.

Zion -- Eau Galle (1889 - 1952)

Eau Galle (a French name meaning "the river of the gravel bank") is a scenic little farm community about 14 miles south of Menomonie. According to several sources it was once a preaching station served by Pastor Albert Siegler while he was at Iron Creek from 1869 to 1870. Who started this station and what happened to it is a mystery. Perhaps a few members of this preaching station were among the charter members of Zion some 15 to 20 years later. There was also a preaching station at

Downsville, another little town about seven miles south of Menomonie. Like the one at Eau Galle, it seems to have disappeared without a trace, just like the scores of little hamlets that once dotted Dunn County in the late 1800's.³²

Zion was first organized in 1889 with 19 charter members and was served by Pastor August Kirchner. The land, now Weber Valley Cemetery, was donated by Peter Weber and William F. Fuhrman whose lands adjoined. Peter Weber was a German immigrant who came to Eau Galle in the late 1850's and developed a government claim of 80 acres from heavy timber to productive farmland. However, he also took out a year and a half of his time to fight in the Civil War. After the end of the war he participated in the "Grand Review" parade in Washington D. C. before returning to his farm in Eau Galle.³³ William F. Fuhrman, also a German immigrant, came to Eau Galle from Dodge County (Wisconsin) in 1861. In Dodge County he had worked in brick yards and other places while his thrifty wife managed to accumulate some property there. This property was then exchanged for 80 acres of timber land up in Eau Galle. There they chopped and grubbed their way to a decent living, but not forgetting God's providence of course. Like other pioneers in the county, they began with little more than a log shanty and a hay shed with a cow and a pig in it. But as time passed their little homestead became a successful farm.³⁴

Over the years Zion shared a pastor; first with Immanuel Lutheran Church of Plum City and later with St. Peter's of Elmwood, both in Pierce County. But on February 1, 1952, the church was closed and members joined St. Peter's. Ironically, the last pastor to serve Zion of Eau Galle was Edmund Becker, also the last pastor to serve the congregation of St. John's at Iron Creek.

A special memory of Zion was the annual Mission Festival. Early on Sunday morning the men of the congregation erected a tent by attaching a threshing canvas to the side of the church. Meanwhile the women cooked coffee at the nearby Weber residence and brought it to the church in milk cans. Dinner was then served in the tent. Like many other little country churches of the Synod, it had no running water or electricity.³⁵

St. John's - Weston Township (1880 - present)

Many of the German Lutheran immigrants who came to Dunn County stopped first in Dodge or Jefferson County in southern Wisconsin. The early settlers near Hatchville in Weston Township who formed and organized St. John's were no exception. But they held much more than that in common. Mrs. Lawrence Bock, a member of the congregation, writes: "All of them were typical German Lutherans who brought with them a desire to succeed and a deep love for their church. To them work was a pleasure, prayer a necessity."

What is so remarkable about the history of St. John's is the vivid description of its beginning. According to Mrs. Charles Frank, a charter member of the congregation, it all began on a summer day in about 1880 when Pastor Kleinlein of Menomonie came to visit and get acquainted with the German families in the area. Pastor Kleinlein found them working in the fields: the men were cutting grain with cradles while the women were binding the grain into sheaves and stacking them. When they met Pastor Kleinlein they all gladly left their work and gathered in a log home. There Pastor Kleinlein conducted the first service. "Pastor Kleinlein made plans with the men-folk concerning the next time he should come to hold a service. Then we all went back to our work in the fields," said Mrs. Frank.

Pastors from St. Paul's in Menomonie (about ten miles to the east) continued conducting services in the homes until 1886. By then St. John's had been incorporated with 16 men signing the document in 1885; members numbered 29. A council was also formed and two acres of land were purchased for a church building and a cemetery. In 1886 a pastor H. Gieschen became the first resident pastor and the first church building was dedicated on November 14 of the same year. However, by 1912 the second church building was erected and two years later the parsonage also had be replaced because of a fire. About eight years later English services were introduced for every other Sunday, just as they were being introduced in other Wisconsin Synod congregations

throughout the county.³⁶ Finally, the 50th anniversary booklet of St. Peter's in Elmwood says about St. John's of Hatchville: "This congregation may rightly be called the mother of St. Peter's Lutheran Church."³⁷

The story of Charles Frank, a member of the first council and charter member, maybe sounds familiar by now. An immigrant from Hesse, Frank came to the United States in 1870. He then traveled to Dodge County with his wife where they worked eight years to save some money for land. Then, with two other men, he came to Menomonie where they were met by a man who guided them to the western part of the county. There each man bought 80 acres of heavy timber land. After following trails through the woods, Frank cut a tree on his newly-purchased land, built a small cabin, and then cleared three acres of land in the spring. He also planted a garden at that time. Later he earned a few dollars by working in harvest fields in St. Croix County to the west. Meanwhile he continued clearing his land with a team of oxen. A few years later he saved enough to buy 80 more acres. And so it went.³⁸

There is something else typical about Charles Frank, too, although it may have not been emphasized as much earlier. He took time out to serve his community by building and maintaining roads, helping to organize a cooperative creamery, serving on the local town and school boards, and aiding new settlers as they came in. As we look back at biographies of other German Lutheran immigrants in this study, we will find that many of them became involved with such activities. They did not merely live for themselves or put up barriers to keep out the rest of the world. At least in the first generation of immigrants, the caricature of "Fritz", the hard-drinking, tight-fisted German farmer, seems to have no little or no merit.

St. Paul's - Ridgeland (1872 - present)

While St. John's of Hatchville (Weston Township) is barely inside the Dunn County border, St. Paul's of Ridgeland (Towns of Prairie Farm and Dallas) is barely outside. But though this parish is actually found in southern Barron County, its early history

is so intimately connected with the Wisconsin Synod's history in Dunn County that it should be included. Moreover, many of the members of St. Paul's make their homes in Dunn County, to the south.

The history of St. Paul's begins in 1869 when a group of settlers decided to investigate the possibility of being served by a Lutheran pastor. Until then they were being served by Methodist circuit riders. But from their earlier Lutheran training these German immigrants realized that as hard-working as the circuit riders were, their doctrine had room for improvement. So together they decided to investigate the possibility of having a Lutheran pastor conduct services for them. William Kottke, a charter member of the congregation, then walked 30 miles south to Menomonie in order to invite Pastor Albert Siegler to come. Though Pastor Siegler was already serving several Menomonie area congregations, he gladly accepted Kottke's invitation.

Because of the tremendous amount of walking the immigrants did in those days, Kottke's journey to Menomonie probably did not seem all that difficult to him. Besides, it was for a good cause. On the other hand, Pastor Siegler's ride north was not so easy, at least on one leg of the journey. As we hear Pastor Siegler's fascinating account it is difficult not to rejoice in the conviction God gave him for his ministry and to sense the primitive world in which he labored.

My first trip to Prairie Farm will ever be vivid in my memory. It was in the summer of 1869 when I was requested to also serve the Lutherans in Prairie Farm. The trip was made on horseback. After riding for 30 miles, I came to a river which was spanned by a bridge. On this day the river had left its original course and had torn another on the opposite of the bridge. What was to be done? Should I return? This was impossible since I knew how anxiously the people waited to hear a sermon. In God's name I set the spurs and the horse plunged into the water. As soon as the solid footing was gone, the horse with his rider was swept down the rapid stream. But the guiding hand of God was with me and led me safe to land. I have forgotten the name of the brother who took care of me, but at his home a goodly number of worshippers gathered the next morning to whom I preached a sermon. After dinner I granted their request and again preached to them.²⁹

The forgotten brother was Gottlieb Beiswanger, who took Pastor Siegler into his home for the night. Beiswanger was an early settler in the region, a Civil War vete-

ran and a charter member of St. Paul's. What is particularly interesting is that a list of the people who attended those first two services was made. All became charter members of the congregation when it was organized in 1872. By then Pastor Siegler had served him for many years. Pastor Siegler would faithfully serve many congregations over the next 40 years and would prove that love for people and love for God's Word go hand in hand. Pastor Siegler's life and ministry are the subject of another church history paper written by classmate Jim Seiltz.

A book called History of Barron County (the Barron County equivalent of Cooper's History of Dunn County, Wisconsin) contains the biographies of several of these charter members as well as members who joined later. Virtually all these people started with little or nothing, but eventually "made a go of it" and became successful farmers. Key words in their biographies are "self-denial", "frugality" and "hospitality." The concept of wealth in those days was also considerably different than it is today. One member, Christopher Meyer, was considered to be somewhat better off than his neighbors because he owned a pair of mules and two cows. His wife also had a spinning wheel to keep her family well-supplied with socks, mittens and caps.⁴⁰ Working in the woods for Knapp, Stout and Company during the winter was a common practice for many of them. But when spring came it was back to work pulling stumps and clearing off brush on their own land, in addition to raising crops and keeping a few animals. A trip to the local clinic for every little ache was also not a part of pioneer life. One member, Daniel Wirth, tells about walking to Menomonie 30 miles away to get a tooth pulled. When he arrived there the pain was gone and he decided to postpone the pulling. So he trudged the long journey home again, only to have the tooth start aching again just as he got within sight of his cabin.⁴¹ And should we still feel sorry for ourselves there is John Neck, a president of the trustees in the congregation. After working late out in the woods, he would come home with his shoes frozen to his feet and would have to leave them on all night because he could not get them off. In the late fall he would often start for Barron (14 miles north of Ridgeland) with a load of hay

at two o'clock in the morning with no mittens and no overcoat, only to receive a small price for his load. But as with the other pioneers in the church, life improved.⁴²

Until 1885, St. Paul's was served by the pastors who served the Menomonie area churches. The first was Pastor Pohlmann who traveled 50 miles one way from Durand to conduct services. The next was Pastor C. Althoff who served from 1872 till 1877. Under Pastor Althoff the congregation was first organized, in 1872. Then came the series of short pastorates that plagued the other congregations as well. Pastors Notz, Jaeger and Fuerchtenicht all served about a total of two and a half years. However, under the brief leadership of seminary graduate Eugen Notz, St. Paul's joined the Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Kleinlein's stay from 1880 till 1885 was also blessed with both spiritual and numerical growth in the congregation.

With Pastor Kleinlein's departure, St. Paul's became part of a different parish. Together with several other congregations in Barron County, it called Pastor Oswald Lugenheim. Lugenheim boarded with several members of the congregation before moving to Cameron, the site of another parish congregation. During his term the members of St. Paul's held their first annual meeting and election of officers. It's no shock that the congregation elected a president, treasurer and secretary. What may surprise us is that it chose two men to lead the congregation in singing. But of course there were two practical problems which kept St. Paul's from having a piano or a pipe organ. First, it probably could not afford one and, secondly, it had no place to put one. Until 1893 services would continue to be held in the members' homes or in three area schoolhouses on both sides of the county line. The sites of the services were alternated for the sake of equity in terms of distance, for some walked or rode many miles in order to worship.

But in 1893 that would change—almost. At the annual meeting on August 14, 1892, it was resolved to construct a church building. The problem was trying to decide where to build it since everyone wanted the church near his home. The solution was a compromise. Two churches would be built, one in Prairie Farm Township and the other in

Dallas Township. In the summer of 1893 these two churches were dedicated in separate services. The people attending the two churches continued to consider themselves one congregation, conducting business meetings together and electing one group of officers. Over time however, they concluded that they were actually two separate congregations in the same parish. All of this took place during the pastorate of John Freund, who served St. Paul's and other churches from 1889 till 1899.

By 1896 the congregations had grown large enough to support their own pastor, so it was resolved in another annual meeting to build a parsonage and call a pastor together with Poplar Creek. In 1899 the parsonage was built (across from the Prairie Farm church) and Pastor Henry Abelmann became its first occupant in the same year. During Pastor Abelmann's years at St. Paul's the congregation acquired a bell and an organ, as well as land for a cemetery. Pastor Abelmann served St. Paul's until 1907, when Pastor Gustav Vater succeeded him. On February 21, 1909, Pastor Vater conducted the first English services for the congregation. At first they were held at a school to accomodate members in that area, but eventually they were held in the church itself.⁴⁹

In a sense the transition from German to English marked the end of an era at St. Paul's. A larger church built in 1916 was yet another sign of change. Last, but hardly least, was the ever-increasing popularity of the automobile. All three of these changes were occurring in many other Wisconsin Synod churches as well. Were they good changes? For the most part, yes. Yet maybe something was lost along the way, too, like the close fellowship the pioneers felt with each other and with their Lord. One can sense it just in reading the histories of the above congregations. Obviously we cannot relive the days of the 1860's and 1870's as our grandparents and greatgrandparents experienced ^{them}. But perhaps if we take time out to appreciate their struggles and to marvel at their faith and love despite those struggles, we can capture some of that spirit.

ENDNOTES

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3. Golden Jubilee: St. Katherine's at Beyer Settlement, Dunn County, Wisconsin, p. 15.
4. J. C. Jensson, American Lutheran Biographies. (Milwaukee: A. Houtkamp & Son, 1890), pp. 526.
5. Edward F. Mohldehnke, "Fuenfe Jahre in Amerika," Evangelische Kirchenzeitung, January - June, 1869, p. 680.
6. History of Barron County, Wisconsin, (Minneapolis: Cooper Publishing, 1922), p. 59.
7. History of Dunn County, Wisconsin, (Minneapolis: Cooper Publishing, 1925), p. 902.
8. p. 486.
9. p. 903.
10. "Traugott Gensike," Gemeindeblatt July 1, 1905.
11. John P. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod, 2nd ed. (Sauk Rapids: Sentinel Printing, 1981), p. 104.
12. Golden Jubilee p. 15.
13. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Menomonie, Wisconsin 1947, p. 8.
14. Golden Jubilee p. 17.
15. Page 18.
16. The Seventy-Fifth Anniverary of St. Paul's, Menomonie. p. 9.
17. Golden Jubilee p. 19.
18. Page 20.
19. John M. Russell, Dunn County Footprints of History (Dunn County Historical Society).
20. History of Dunn County, Wisconsin, p. 811.
21. Page 599.

22. Golden Jubilee, p 22.
23. "Fire Destroys Iron Creek Church."
24. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of St. Paul's, Menomonie. p. 9.
25. History of Dunn County, Wisconsin, p. 486
26. Page 611.
27. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of St. Paul's, Menomonie. p. 9.
28. Golden Jubilee, p. 18.
29. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of St. Paul's, Menomonie. p. 13.
30. Page 9.
31. One Hundredth Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church, Popple Creek (1984), p. 1.
32. The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of St. Paul's, Menomonie. p. 8.
33. History of Dunn County, Wisconsin, p. 709.
34. Page 734.
35. Dunn County Historical Society, Dunn County History (1984), p.23.
36. Page 82.
37. Fiftieth Anniversary of St. Peter's Lutheran Church [Elmwood, WI] (1912 - 1962), p. 3.
38. History of Dunn County, Wisconsin, p. 641.
39. Golden Jubilee, p. 16.
40. History of Barron County, Wisconsin, p. 630.
41. Page 526.
42. Page 780.
43. One Hundred Years of Grace: The One Hundredth Anniversary Of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Churches, Towns Of Prairie Farm and Dallas, Wisconsin (1972) pp. 5 - 7.

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