

A GLIMPSE OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS
IN THE FOUNDING AND EARLY YEARS OF
ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
OAKWOOD, WISCONSIN
1832 - 1852

by
W. Paul Brinkman

Senior Church History
Professor Fredrich
April 28, 1978

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

PREFACE

Names, dates, and locations are to the historian what rough sketches on a canvass are to the painter. From a rough sketch one may recognize what the painter is depicting, but the rough sketch takes on additional significance as the artist applies strokes of color. While this paper can only be considered a brief survey of but a few aspects of the earliest years of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church on the old Kilbourn Road at Oakwood, and while it may offer nothing new to some who are well acquainted with the area, it is hoped that the pages which follow may apply to the names, dates, and locations a few strokes of color from the real life events that took place among the founders of St. John's in the years 1832 to 1852.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special expression of appreciation is extended to the following people for their assistance in providing and corroborating sources and information referred to and contained in this paper:

Reverend Gerald Meyer
Reverend Karl Molkentin
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Goelzer
Mr. John Trost
Mr. Fred J. Brinkman
Mrs. Irene Mitzenheim
Mrs. Irene Ballbach

PART I

Early Settlement In Oak Creek and Prevailing Conditions

In order to set the stage for the establishment and development of the Lutheran congregation in Oakwood it is interesting to consider the area to which these early settlers had come. Oakwood is a village within the Township of Oak Creek. Looking at the situation as it existed in 1832 we find a stark contrast between the early years of the settlement which gave birth to this congregation, and the present day life of rapid mobility and mass communication. It is a difference depicted by the contrasts between their struggling to establish a livelihood and our shopping at the local supermarket, or their appreciation at having assistance from friends and neighbors and our choosing the services we need from the "Yellow Pages".

It is perhaps difficult to even imagine what the vicinity of Oak Creek, Wisconsin was like one hundred and fifty years ago. The area was covered by virgin forest, grassy areas, and marshland. We might compare it to the vast forests or wilderness areas that we know of today, but this comparison is inadequate, for in that era the pioneer who first tread through the forests of Oak Creek had no radio to call for help in the event of disaster, no possibility of sending up a flare or smoke signal for a passing airplane, and no transportation beyond his own two legs and possibly some oxen. This sort of information tells us something about the character and stamina of the early founders of our synod's churches.

There is some question about the date of arrival of the

earliest settlers in the Oak Creek area. The first recorded evidence of any white visitors to the vicinity is a bronze tablet, located in the eastern portion of Oak Creek, inscribed with the words, "Green Bay Road Pioneer Road Chicago To Green Bay Established By The Federal Government Of 1832." Some, however, claim that there were white settlers in the western area of Oak Creek as early as 1800. While some of the first families which were instrumental in founding the Lutheran congregation in Oakwood may have settled in the area earlier, the great majority of the settlers began to arrive in the early 1830's as Germans from all parts of the Old Country flocked into the State of Wisconsin. In a brief period of ten years there was a tremendous influx of settlers to the area, some single, others married and arriving to settle with their entire family. The township took shape quickly as more settlers arrived, and by 1841 the Township of Oak Creek was granted an independent status from that of the Lake Township. First land sales in Oak Creek were recorded about 1838. Financial discouragements in the late 1830's somewhat retarded the growth of the township so that in 1842 the population was estimated at no more than forty families within the Township of Oak Creek.

The eastern portion of the township was settled predominantly by Roman Catholics, and the settlement of the western portion was predominantly Lutheran. While these groups tended to settle in this way there is no indication of any strife or problems in this regard. In fact, as new settlers arrived it was common for them to live in the homes of other settlers until new log cabins could be constructed, and there is at

least one record of a German Lutheran family residing with an Irish Catholic family in the eastern portion of the township until a log cabin was completed for the newly arrived German settlers. While they did not speak the same language, their descendants recall many comments to the effect that they got along very well together.

It was also common at that time that Indians of the area would approach the white settlers apparently for the purpose of trading. There is no record of hostility in these instances. For the most part, however, white settlers were fearful of the Indians and did not want to cause the Indians to become angry. The white settlers conducted trade with the Indians out of fear. The Indians offered their dried venison in exchange for fresh milk or other items the settlers might have. The dried meat was unappealing to the white settlers who were unaccustomed to such food and perhaps even harbored notions that it was not fit to eat. So it was that the pets of the settlers often feasted on dried venison.

As settlement in the township developed certain settlers of the area opened stores and inns to meet the needs of the population and those who traveled through the area. The trail through Oakwood, later known as the Kilbourn Road, saw its share of travelers. If a person became ill while traveling he was left at the nearest inn to recover. If a person died while he was traveling, or while staying at an inn, the remains had to be buried as soon as possible. A burial plot for such travelers developed in a location that later became the site of a chapel for a group that split away from the Lutheran congregation in Oakwood. The markers used on the graves of travelers were per-

haps not the quality that others would have been, and as these markers deteriorated they were thrown on a heap, thus leaving many unmarked graves. After the founding of St. John's congregation some travelers apparently were buried in the St. John's Cemetery as well. Some grave markers in the cemetery bear names which are not found in any church or community records, and thus may be the graves of some early travelers in the area.

Founders Of St. John's Congregation

While there are vast differences which exist between the patterns of living then and now, the sinful condition of people and their need for the good news of the Gospel is something that has not changed. So it is that Rev. Plass comments, "Our forefathers were aware that 'a man is not profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul.' They sought spiritual food." (St. John's Centennial Booklet p5) The religious background of the early settlers in Oakwood was evident by their use of the Bible and other instructional booklets which they had brought from their Fatherland. While many early settlers came to this country under a sort of pre-arranged plan to meet with others whom they knew would be here, there is no indication that the early settlers in the Oak Creek area were part of any such group. Early records indicate that most of the settlers in the Oakwood area came from Germany, however, they had no ties with one another prior to their arrival in the Oakwood area. Each family, for all practical purposes, was on its own both physically and spiritually. While the majority of these settlers were nominal Lutherans, regional differences and variations in their earlier

religious training became evident as the settlers came together for worship and later formed a congregation.

Missionary Societies in Europe sent missionaries to the United States to minister to the spiritual needs of the early settlers. It was a visit of such a missionary to the Oakwood area which resulted in the first worship services being held at the home of one of the settlers, Dan Goelzer. The location of his residence and general store was apparently situated in an area where it was very natural for a missionary to inquire regarding the possibility of serving the people and holding worship services. While there are no records of those early meetings, some of the historical summaries of the congregation make reference to their being held around 1840. It was in 1843 that the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was officially founded, at that time it consisted of twenty-five voting members with their families and children. The list of original members includes: B. Bollengraber, G. Ferber, D. Goelzer, L. George, J. Hohnadel, G. Hahn, J. Hess, J. Kufall, H. Lieber, P. Mueller, K. Rothe, J. Rodenbeck, J. Stampf, K. Seyfurth, J. Sauer, E. Seebach, G. Schnattner, M. Schober, G. Strasser, J. Salchow, C. Schlitt, J. Uhlenbrock, G. Werner, F. Zeise, and J. Zimdars.

Checking various records, it was possible to secure information concerning the following people from the earliest members of St. John's:

Dan Goelzer came to this country in the early 1800's and settled near Oakwood, Wisconsin. The Goelzer family operated a general store to the south of Oakwood. There is little information available concerning the Goelzer family in their

earliest years in America; however, this family is mentioned in each of the historical accounts as being instrumental in the founding of St. John's Congregation.

George Hahn, birth place unknown, born in 1814, and according to naturalization records entered the United States from France in July, 1833. Edward D. Holton was listed as the witness for his naturalization. While little is known about the earliest days of George Hahn's settling in Oakwood, we hear that by 1867 his involvement in community affairs had developed to the point of his being elected to the position of town supervisor by a sixty-four percent majority. This election was recorded in the Milwaukee Sentinel of April 4, 1867, which indicated that the election was a sweep for the Republicans. The Sentinel reported, "The Republicans in Oak Creek have done a good work in electing by good majority their whole town ticket." The article went on to say that this Republican strength was directly attributed to the exertion of prominent Germans in the township. Mr. Hahn's community involvement is also recorded in the early Oakwood school records where he is listed as one of the first chairmen of the school district.

John Sauer, according to early records, was born in Mecklenburg, Germany, in 1803, and entered the United States in August, 1841. John Stampf and Johann Meyer, also early settlers in the Oak Creek area, were listed as witnesses on his naturalization records. According to the Milwaukee Sentinel of April 7, 1854, Sauer became active in the town leadership and was elected to public office.

George Schattner was born in Germany in 1805, and entered

the United States from France in May, 1846. The naturalization records list his witnesses as Michael Rott and Philipp Schwartz. Mr. Schattner entered the United States at the same time George Werner arrived, and the name Michael Rott appears as a witness on the records of both George Schattner and George Werner. It is quite possible that these men came to the United States and settled in the Oakwood area together, however, no additional information to this effect has been developed.

Ehrenfried Seebach was born in Germany on February 18, 1808. According to naturalization records Seebach entered the United States in June, 1845, having come to this country from Prussia. The witnesses for his naturalization were George Hahn and John Lauer, both early settlers of the Oakwood area. There is far more information available regarding Mr. Seebach than any of the early founders or pastors of St. John's Congregation. Much of the information available regarding Mr. Seebach had been forwarded to Rev. Plass (Pastor of St. John's Congregation, 1911-1955) by Rev. C. E. Berg, a grandson of Seebach. The Gemeinde Blatt (June 1, 1900) makes reference to the early efforts of Mr. Seebach in securing qualified pastors for the area of Milwaukee and Racine Counties.

Seebach had learned the trade of coppersmith in Prussia under his father. After serving in the army for three years, he married and went to work in a factory where he engaged in iron work. Later, in 1839, he opened his own business. Seebach came directly to Milwaukee Wisconsin in 1845 and purchased a farm in the Oakwood area. His farm of one hundred forty acres has been described as one of the finest in that area of the state. The Milwaukee Sentinel of April 11, 1870, lists

Ehrenfried Seebach as being elected to the one year term as Justice of the Peace in the Town of Oak Creek. His farm prospered, he was active in the community, but most significant of all he was an active worker in God's kingdom. Indications are that he was of Reformed background, but his wife was a staunch Lutheran. His activity on behalf of the church involved writing to German Missionary Societies expressing the need in America for pastors. During a vacancy at St. John's Congregation Seebach conducted services by reading prepared materials. Seebach was also active in the instruction of the young people of the congregation at that time.

George Werner, birth place unknown, was born in 1816, and came to the United States from France in May, 1846. Naturalization records list his witnesses as Michael Rott (also listed as witness for George Schattner) and Rev. John Muehlhaeuser, whom we recognize as the founder of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It is not known whether Mr. Werner had been in contact with Rev. Muehlhaeuser prior to his coming to America, or whether the two men met in this country.

Frederick Zeise was born in Germany in 1817, and, according to naturalization records entered the United States in May, 1840. The naturalization records list the names Newkirck and Fitzgerald as witnesses for Zeise, indicating that his early contacts in the Oak Creek area were probably with the community in the eastern portion of the township, since this is the area where Newkirck and Fitzgerald had settled. Newkirck and Fitzgerald were members of the Roman Catholic Church in the eastern portion of the township, and it is not known what affiliation Zeise had with these people.

PART II

Early Pastors and Their WorkSchmidt and Early Missionaries

Around 1840 traveling missionaries visited the Oak Creek area and inquired as to the possibility of conducting services in the area. Inquiries were also made at the store of Dan Goelzer, located on the old Kilbourn Road near the Root River. From this very simple start the congregation of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakwood, was to be formed only a few years later. It is not known who this first missionary was, or if there might have been various missionaries who stopped on their journeys to conduct services. It is not known definitely how soon this little group of Christians was able to find its own pastor, however, there is indication that by 1841 there was a Pastor Schmidt who served this congregation in Oakwood. Whether Schmidt actually served this congregation is in question, but he was in the area at least until 1844, at which time he left Wisconsin to go to a parish in New York. Whatever the case may be, the Oakwood group was without a minister. Mr. Seebach was active in writing to German Mission Societies to request the sending of a pastor. It is during this time that Mr. Seebach conducted reading services and took care of teaching duties among the youth. In one of his letters requesting a pastor Mr. Seebach mentioned that "a Lutheran pastor had already held forth but forfeited his position by scandalous conduct." (Koehler p39) This would seem to indicate that the little congregation had the regular services of a pastor at some time prior to this, however, it is not definitely established that this pastor referred to is Pastor Schmidt.

Concerning the possibilities for growth in the Oakwood area Mr. Seebach is quoted as writing,

"There is a great field here for Christian mission, and splendid congregations might soon, under a good shepherd, prosper and become mission centers for other localities; for there is a desire among a great many for the Word of God. But how shall they believe if it isn't preached to them?" (Koehler p39)

Weinmann and His Call to St. John's

While Mr. Seebach was writing to Germany requesting a pastor there were other developments transpiring which brought quick results for St. John's in the matter of getting a new pastor. Three pastors from the Langenberg Mission Society in Germany by the names of Weinmann, Rauschenbusch, and Wrede, were enroute to Baltimore. Having heard of this in New York, Pastor Schmidt had immediately written to the responsible committee in New York City and requested to have one of these pastors fill the vacancy at Oakwood. Pastor John Weinmann was sent to Oakwood from New York while the Barmen Mission House in Germany was at the same time assigning Pastor Dulitz to the church in Oakwood. Weinmann arrived before Dulitz and assumed the pastorate at St. John's Oakwood.

Weinmann and the Founding of Our Synod

Pastor Weinmann served St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakwood, and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Caledonia, until 1850. Pastor Weinmann is particularly remembered for his activities in the founding of the Wisconsin Synod. It was three men, Muehlhaeuser, Weinmann and Wrede, who were concerned about the divergence and duplication of effort in the southeastern Wisconsin area. On December 8, 1849 these three men met in Milwaukee and organized a synod. All indications are that Weinmann found support among the members of the Oakwood

Congregation toward the founding of a synod. The fact that these early congregations lent their support to these pastors in their effort to found the synod certainly made their work of forming the synod much easier. The original constitution of the Wisconsin Synod indicated the name of the organization as "The German Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Wisconsin" with the individual meetings of the pastors referred to as Ministerial Meetings and the conventions of delegates and pastors of the congregations being referred to as a Synodical Meeting. A preference was definitely evident toward the Ministerial Meeting as opposed to the Synodical Meeting, demonstrating the power and rights that were granted to pastors at that time that are no longer recognized. (Koehler p41) It was Weinmann who wrote the constitution of the Wisconsin Synod, since he was the secretary of the synod. After that meeting in December, 1849, Pastor Weinmann was in a position to report to the congregation at Oakwood that a synod had been founded.

Pastor Weinmann served St. John's Congregation until 1850, at which time he moved to Racine where he accepted a call to a Racine congregation. Later Weinmann took a call to a Baltimore congregation where he still maintained his membership in the Wisconsin Synod. From Baltimore he traveled to Germany to visit his aging mother. Upon returning to the United States Weinmann lost his life in a fire aboard ship. Some are critical of Weinmann, citing early indications that Weinmann was a Millennialist, however, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact doctrinal positions of many of these early men, particularly because of the variable nature of their early training. Weinmann is described as a dedicated and energetic worker in ministering to

the congregation at Oakwood and in carrying the Gospel message to people in the surrounding areas.

Rausch

After Pastor Weinmann left Oakwood to go to Racine, the congregation requested a pastor through Rev. Muehlhaeuser, President of the young Wisconsin Synod. A man by the name of Gustav Rausch was presented to St. John's Congregation to serve them as a called worker. The background of this pastor is not exactly known. Research was carried out by Professor Kowalke of Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin regarding Rev. Rausch. Rev. Karl Molkentin (pastor of St. John's, 1955-1975) indicates that Professor Kowalke thought the name "Rausch" might possibly have been a shortening of the name "Rauschenbusch". If so, it is postulated that Rausch may well be the Rauschenbusch who came to America with Wrede and Weinmann in July, 1846. If this indeed is the same person, then we know from other records that he studied at Tuebingen and had served several years in the ministry at Altoona before coming to America. As for theology, we know that Rauschenbusch contended he would face people with "no definite doctrine....not represent any distinct party....nor shape things outwardly....but would oppose only the Roman Church." (Koehler p36)

A Split in the Congregation

While the background of Pastor Rausch is uncertain, we do know that he served at St. John's Congregation for no more than one year. Historical accounts of St. John's Congregation refer to a split which occurred in the congregation under Pastor Rausch. The split is attributed to differences on doctrinal matters and the fact that "Pastor Rausch had Rationalistic

leanings". (St. John's One Hundred Twenty-fifth Anniversary Booklet) In an address to St. John's Congregation on October 8, 1933, Rev. Plass referred to this episode very briefly,

"Not very much is known about Rev. Rausch, his (Weinmann's) successor; no doubt that he did his work conscientiously. It would not seem so from the fact that a split occurred during his administration, but who can tell whose fault it was? It may have been his, but it may also have been the people's fault...who knows? Usually there are always two sides to a tale." (Appendix A)

Pastor Rausch led a group of "free thinkers" away from the St. John's Congregation. According to land records, a Mr. Jahnke deeded a plot of land to this group who followed Rausch. The land deeded to this group was the plot designated for burial of travelers as referred to earlier in this paper.

The Paynesville Chapel

It is important to understand that at the time the earliest settlers were arriving in the area it was not an easy matter to simply identify and avoid errors held either by people of the community or by a pastor who would come to serve the church. Rausch and his group are an example of this. The exact details of the split which occurred are not clear, however, enough information has sifted down to us through the years that we at least can recognize a certain degree of doctrinal concern that existed on the part of certain members of the St. John's Congregation. Rausch's group built a small chapel on the land given to them, and this chapel came to be known as The First Christian Free Church of the Towns of Franklin and Oak Creek. According to the recollection of a descendant of a family who had lived in the area of that Free Church, the interior of the chapel had a pulpit or lectern in the front center, and on the walls were portraits of Thomas Paine (or Payne) and Karl Schurz.

The portraits chosen by this group to adorn the interior of their place of worship tells us a great deal about their theology. Paine who died in New York in 1809, has variably been described as a bold and vigorous friend of human liberty, with a broad mind and progressive approach to the needs of humanity. He was the author of "Age of Reason", "The Crisis", "Common Sense", and "The Rights of Man". Most of all, Paine is noted for the uncompromising and audacious attack which he made upon the Bible. While he was not an atheist, Paine's only belief was in a "Creator-God". Karl Schurz was an American editor and political leader who died in 1906. Schurz has often been referred to as the greatest American of German birth. Rausch and his group apparently followed the thinking of these men. Because of their being known as "free thinkers" and specifically because of their following Thomas Paine, the location of the First Christian Free Church came to be known as Paynesville.

The supporters of the group at Paynesville indicate that this little group of German Protestant free thinkers came to Paynesville to escape the suppression of freedom in thought and religion. The cemetery at Paynesville has been called the only exclusive burial place for free thinkers in the world. The Paynesville chapel would have been destroyed in 1937, since it had not seen regular use for many years, but a group of interested citizens, the Paynesville Memorial Association took action to preserve it, and today it is a historical site. One interesting point concerning the Paynesville Chapel is that it was constructed on pillars of fieldstone rather than upon a full foundation. While it is not actually significant in itself, this at least symbolizes the difference between the

group at Paynesville and the Christian congregation of St. John's Oakwood. Pastor Rausch had led a group of people astray, encouraging them to build only on a "partial foundation".

Pastor Rausch was in Paynesville for only a short time before moving to Iowa. Later reports indicate that he was killed in a fall from a horse. The fact that Rausch spent such a brief time at Paynesville may possibly be an indication of other difficulties which existed between the people of the area and this man, however, there is no factual evidence to substantiate this.

Rebuilding Under Koester

As a result of the split of 1851 St. John's Congregation consisted only of about sixteen members and their families. It was into this setting that Pastor Conrad Koester accepted the call to shepherd this little flock of God's people. In effect, it was almost the start of a new congregation. The log cabin church which they had built was removed, and a new church was constructed. Pastor Koester was truly a blessing to the Christian people of Oakwood, for he guided this congregation with God's help through a period of growth and development after the discouraging events of 1851. As one pages through the early records of St. John's Congregation it is very evident that with the year 1852 a pastor came to St. John's whom God had blessed with many talents. One, in particular, was his gift of keeping neat, thorough, and accurate congregational records. While prior to his coming the information regarding the development of the congregation is very sketchy, after he arrived the records are more complete and provide much more information. While much could be said concerning

the ministry of Pastor Koester, we shall limit our remarks to avoid being carried far beyond the year 1852.

PART III

Observations Concerning the Birth of St. John's, Oakwood

St. John's is a congregation which started from the very informal meetings within the home of one settler, and grew into a congregation which has been maturing and developing over a period of almost one hundred fifty years. Already in 1933 members of the congregation were amazed as Rev. Plass expressed it,

"Ninety summers have come and gone....you will admit that that is a pretty long journey to make from the cradle. Well St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oakwood, our church, has traveled that far. Here in this village, in the days way back, it was born, not amidst wealth; in those days the hundreds and thousands of dollars did not come skating along, so to speak, no, frugal were the years then; in an old cabin it opened its eyes and looked about and wondered whether it would survive. It did not perish. God did not leave it perish. He protected it. He prospered it." (Appendix A)

As evidenced in this brief sketch of the first years of the congregation development was not an easy thing. There were the stark realities of life which faced every one of the early settlers. It was hard to get pastors to serve these early settlers. Travel was not easy. There are accounts of early pastors covering miles and miles on foot to minister to God's people. Pastor Koester, for instance, walked from St. John's Oakwood to minister to Christians at St. John's Congregation at Sixtyeighth and Forest Home. A descendant of early settlers recalls references to Pastor Koester's path through the woods between the two congregations. When one stops to think about these things, these determined early Christians of our community demonstrated a tremendous witness in furthering the cause of proclaiming the "one thing needful", "the priceless treasure", the Gospel of

Jesus Christ! We think in terms of calling a pastor from one of our synodical schools or parishes or establishing new missions through our Church Extension Fund. The early founders of St. John's Congregation in Oakwood prayed that God would simply send to them a pastor who would teach and shepherd them in the truth of God's Word. The early founders of St. John's Oakwood had no synod to turn to at first for assistance, but rather, their foresight in recognizing future needs led to the founding of a synod through one of their pastors. Gradually the infant congregation grew, it crawled, it began to stand on its feet, it stumbled over the obstacles of Reformed Theology and "free thinking", and by God's grace it stood up again and continued its growth into the areas of Christian education and the work of carrying the Gospel message to people throughout the area.

The historical surface of St. John's Congregation during the years 1832 through 1852 has only been scratched in the presentation of this paper. The gathering of historical information is an ongoing process. While the story presented in this paper concerning the early years of St. John's Congregation has many gaps, it is hoped that it has begun to at least develop a picture in the mind of the reader as to the lives and experiences of the founders of St. John's Congregation.

Appendix A

An Address
to St. John's Congregation

October 8, 1933

by Rev. Martin Plass

Oakwood, Wis., October 8, 1933.

Dear Congregational Members, Friends and Guests:

A whole century, one hundred years, less 10, ... quite a long time, is it not? Not many of you have seen 90 summers come and go; there may be some who are eight, some seventy and sixty, others fifty, and the rest counting their days from one to fifty...but 90? You will admit that that's a pretty long journey to make from the cradle. Well, St. John's Ev. Luth. Church in Oakwood, our church, has travelled that far. (Here in this village, in the days way back, it was born, not amidst wealth; in those days the hundreds and thousands of dollars did not come skating along, so to speak, no, frugal were the years then; in an old log cabin it opened its eyes and looked about and wondered whether it would survive. It did not perish. God did not leave it perish. He protected it. He prospered it.) It was changed in the course of time from a simple hut into larger quarters, and then again, and once ^{more} ~~again~~, last year, so that today there stands a remodeled church, which beckons old and young to come and hear the Word of God. Some of you people here present can recall to their memory the unpretentious log cabin, and others perhaps may have had occasion to see ~~the picture of one~~ ^{of the one} on their auto journeys throughout the State, or the picture of one in one of their old geographies....just think: in such a crude old building, with old boards serving as benches, sermons were preached by the old missionary, Rev. Schmidt, from a pulpit which was the most simple structure, and one can believe that our forefathers gladly went the long way in good weather and through rain and snow to listen to what their pastor had to say. On this, our 100th anniversary day, have we stopped and thought about the hardships with which those first ministers of the gospel were confronted? Who of us has embraced the old Rev. Schmidt in his thoughts and said to him: "Well done, old pastor!" Who of you, along the track of remembrance, went to pay him a visit, now, after so long a time, to the good log cabin which he shared with that other venerable pioneer, Mr. G. Geisler?

And don't forget, that the ministers of long ago ^{did not only} strictly abided by ~~their~~ the words of their calls; no, they went about in the neighborhood, and they were large neighborhoods in those days, and with great deal of work and patience ^{they} tried to gather the sheep into God's fold.... [Not very much is known about Rev. ^Bausch, his successor; no doubt but that he did his work conscientiously. It would not seem so from the fact that a split occurred during his administration, but who can tell whose fault it ~~was~~ was? It may have been ~~the people's fault~~ his, but it may also have been the people's fault...who knows? usually there are always two sides to a tale.] In 1852...bear in mind that this was during President Fillmore's administration, a name which you have long ~~been~~ forgotten...Rev. C. Koester gathered around his banner 16 members, and with this handful of men and women, not only started a new congregation, but with them had the old log cabin church removed and instead thereof had a new church built on its site, which lasted 42 years, and during that time

three ministers occupied its pulpits: ¹⁸⁵² Rev. C. Koester, ~~from~~ to 1864; Rev. Ph. Brenner, 1864 to 1870; ~~Rev. G. D. Enninger, 1870 to 1880; Rev. C. Gausewitz, 1880 to 1893, and Rev. H. Ebert, 1893 to 1894.~~ ^{Rev. G. D. Enninger, 1870 to 1880; Rev. C. Gausewitz, 1880 to 1893, and Rev. H. Ebert, 1893 to 1894.} Well that ^{not} three had five. Those who left their footprints on the sands of time were Rev. Koester, under whose supervision the new church was built; his successor, Rev. Ph. Brenner, because strong within him was ~~burning~~ burning God's Words: "Suffer the Children to come to Me" which Christ spoke to the little ones centuries ago, and on that ^{good Rev. P. B.} account induced the congregation to build a parochial school and had a teacher appointed to take care of the little lambs. Too bad that the parochial school had such a short-lived life at the time. Some of you grown-ups, who attended ~~the parochial school~~ the parochial school in those days, did it not prove beneficial to your soul-life? You know that if a tree should bear fruit, it must be attended to in its younger years....well, so it is with the Christian life of any man or woman. -- Of course, nearly everybody around here still remembers the old Rev. C. Gausewitz. He did his work well during the time he held his position as pastor of his flock. And I wish to call to your memory that the Gausewitz family ever since kept in touch with real old St. John's. Did not his son Carl, the pastor of Milwaukee Lane, and one time president of the Synodical Conference, always have a soft spot for us? Hasn't it felt good to be remembered that way?.... The pastor who could do big things in a short space of time was Rev. H. Ebert. Think of it, a vacancy pastor from the Town of Franklin

Appendix A (cont'd)

Rev. Ebert toiled in that capacity...not only built a new church, but also erected a new school house. That's going some! Well, the congregation was glad to have its new place of worship, and most likely ^{also} the little ones that once more a parochial school was given to them, even though it was built from the ~~old~~ lumber which belonged to the old Koester church.... The vacancy which Rev. Ebert supervised was finally filled by Rev. Dr. J. ^B Bernthal who superintended church work here from ~~1894~~ 1894 to 1911...17 years. In that year ¹⁹¹¹ he was called to Ironia, Wis., and the undersigned became his successor. Up to now two important events occurred during my ministry: in 1920 the congregation installed a lady teacher for our parochial school. Eleven years long this school had its doors opened to the little ones, and no doubt all those who attended, enjoyed not only the ~~spiritual~~ spiritual, but also the teachings of the three Rs (reading, writing, Arithmetic) which they received at her hands. Hard times came along, they were pressing always more and more, and finally the school had to be abandoned. Let us hope that when good times come again, the doors of our parochial school will be opened once more for the benefit of the little ones, yes, for the benefit of the little ones..... Last year we were compelled to move the Ebert church from its old site to the place where it now stands. The State ~~having~~ allowed us a certain sum, owing to the fact that Highway 41 was considerably widened, and therefore requiring a certain portion of our church property. With the aid of this money thus received, the congregation concluded to transfer the old building to the new site and have the former

remodeled. And now, let us stand by our dear St. John's. God was gracious to protect St. John's for 90 years; really a supreme gift which we did not deserve, but which we, His children, thankfully appreciate. No doubt He wishes us to carry on His work here. Will we heed His call? Will we ward off the worldly tendencies, which are always more and more eager to undermine the Christian structure? Will we turn a deaf ear to all that is detrimental to His Word? Will we do our very best to keep ourselves erect in the Walkings of the Lord and be diligent that our children do the same? The atheists, the non-believers, are asserting themselves; they are sowing always more and more deadly tares in our Christian wheat.... Oh, let us surround the land around our hearts and protect them with the weapons of the Lord! Yes, let us stick to our dear old St. John's now, and forever! Amen. God grant it, amen.

P.S. I wish to remark that St. John has 110 voting ^{male} members and 33 women. Communicants are 745.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Records
(initiated by Rev. Koester. 1852)

Cassette Tape Interviews of Oak Creek pioneers
(project of Oak Creek High School students;
available at Oak Creek Public Library)

Gemeinde-Blatt

Koehler, J.P. THE HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN SYMOD.
(Faith-Life, printed for the Protes'tant Conference
by Sentinel, St. Cloud, Mn. 1970)

Milwaukee County Historical Society Records

100th Anniversary Booklet of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

125th Anniversary Booklet of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

Milwaukee Sentinel. (indexed and available on microfilm
at Milwaukee Public Library)

Zimmermann, THE HERITAGE GUIDEBOOK: LANDMARKS AND HISTORICAL
SIGHTS IN SOUTHEASTERN WISONSIN. (Inland-Heritage Corp.
Milwaukee. 1976)