

I love Thy Zion, Lord,  
The house of Thine abode,  
The Church our blest Redeemer saved  
With His own precious Blood.

I love Thy Church, O God!  
Her walls before Thee stand,  
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,  
And grave on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.

1835 - 1935

*"A Century of Triumphant Faith"*

# CENTENNIAL HISTORY

of

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Canajoharie, N. Y.



by

REV. HERMAN F. VESPER, B. D.



with a Foreword by

Hon. Harry Voorhees Bush

Mayor of Canajoharie



The Hay Trade Journal Publishing Co.

Canajoharie, N. Y.

1935



Rev. Herman F. Vesper  
Pastor since 1927

*With the compliments of  
Herman F. Vesper  
Nov. 25, 1935*

## INTRODUCTION

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Short historical sketches from the pens of Revs. J. A. W. Kirsch, C. J. Reichardt, and J. S. Herold have been written in the past. The first detailed account of the first century of St. John's Church, Canajoharie, N. Y. now appears as a souvenir of its centennial celebration, October 6-15, 1935. The author has carefully studied the Minutes of the Church Council and of the congregational meetings, as well as the church records of ministerial acts. Until 1900 the German language was used exclusively by the ministers and secretaries of the church. An old chest containing legal papers, subscription lists, bills, etc. was placed at the author's disposal, and its contents were studied and some material was used.

Additional information has been found in the "Memorial Volume of the Hartwick Synod" (1881), Rev. Dr. John Nicum's "History of the New York Ministerium" (1888), the Souvenir Booklets of the 70th Anniversary (1905) and of the 80th Anniversary (1915), the "Biographical Record" published by the Philadelphia Seminary (1923), and the author's own collection of newspaper clippings (1927-1935).

The compiler recognizes his indebtedness to the "Canajoharie Radii" and the "Canajoharie Courier" for the kind permission to use their files, to Mayor Harry V. Bush for the loan of Mr. S. L. Frey's essays on "The German Immigration to Canajoharie" and "Schools and Churches of Canajoharie", and of his own booklet on "Canajoharie and the World War" and his short history of Canajoharie in the "Clinton-Sullivan Sesqui-Centennial" and "Canajoharie Centennial" program book, to Miss Minnie Abelling for the use of a paper on "Early Churches of Canajoharie" by her brother Charles, to John Klinkhart and Charles W. Scharff for facts concerning the first church and the Civil War period, and to a number of church members who have graciously furnished photographs of former pastors and of the church. Pictures of some of the earlier ministers could not be obtained.

May this centennial history not only inform our people concerning the past, but also guide them in the present, and inspire them to even greater achievements in the centuries to come. To the Almighty Father in Heaven, without Whose favor and blessing all human efforts must fail, be glory, thanksgiving, and praise evermore through Jesus Christ our Lord.

HERMAN F. VESPER

July-August 1935

## FOREWORD

Church and State; we Americans believe in the separation of them, but the State would not long survive without the Church. Law and order would not exist, and chaos would prevail.

St. John's Church, organized one hundred years ago, ministered to the spiritual welfare of the early Germans who had settled in this community, and in later years during the great German immigration this church did its full duty in aiding these German emigrants to become stalwart American citizens.

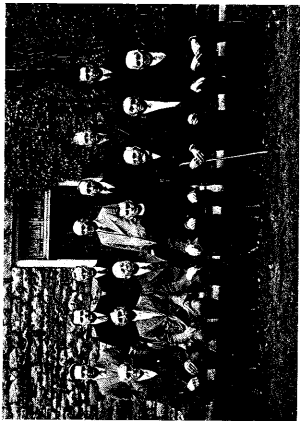
Its sons have fought for liberty, freedom, and humanity, and the congregation has made a name for itself in this community.

On this the one hundredth anniversary, we, the citizens of Canajoharie, offer our heartiest congratulations to pastor and people of Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, and wish you many more years of prosperity and glory in the work for God and Country.

HARRY V. BUSH  
Mayor



Harry Voorhees Bush,  
born October 2, 1889,  
baptized December 26,  
1899 by Rev. H. Hart-  
wig, Mayor of Canajo-  
haria since 1920. Presi-  
dent of Mohawk Valley  
Historical Society.



The Church Council  
Seated, left to right: John C. Barmann, George H. Selman, William J. Ross, Rev. H. P. Vassar, John Kirkham, (honorary member),  
John Mendenhall, Edward H. Haskin,  
Standing, left to right: Floyd Houghton, Ferdinand Hilger, Henry C. Croft, Charles J. Frederick, Edward W. Stanton, C. Vest Shapiro, Carl Metz

# THE CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

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REV. HERMAN F. YESPER, CHAIRMAN  
THE CHURCH COUNCIL

## Officers

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SECRETARY - GEORGE H. SHINEMAN  
FINANCIAL SECRETARY - HENRY C. GROFF  
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## Trustees

JOHN C. RIEMENSCHNEIDER - FERDINAND E. HILGNER - CARL MAHR

## Elders

EDWARD H. MADELEN - JOHN HAMBRECHT

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## PRESIDENTS OF SOCIETIES

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WILLING WORKERS - MRS. SIDNEY DOFF  
LUTHER LEAGUE - ELMER A. SHINEMAN  
MEN'S SOCIETY - CARL MAHR  
WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY - MRS. HERMAN YESPER  
JUNIOR LEAGUE - WILBUR L. FRANK  
THE CHOIR - LAURA BIERBAUER

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## Honorary Centennial Committee

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SCHARFF, CHARLES W.	KLENME, MRS. CHARLES
FREDERICKS, MRS. WILLIAM	KLINGHART, HENRY
WANKER, MRS. VALENTINE	KUWALSKY, MRS. CHARLOTTE
BARSHIED, GEORGE	MILLER, HENRY C.
BARSHIED, MRS. GEORGE	MILLER, WILLIAM
BROWN, EDWARD J.	NIETMAN, MRS. MARY
CRAMER, LENA	HEAMON, WILLIAM H.
FISK, JOHN	RODE, CONRAD
FROSCH, MRS. ADOLF	SCHULTZ, JOHN
HESS, JOHN	YOONT, LEONARD
HESS, MRS. JOHN	WAGNER, HENRY
KAGE, CHARLES	

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## Sexton

Louis A. Frosch

## Our Centennial Prayer

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**A**lmighty God, our dear Father in Heaven; we come to the celebration of the Centennial of our beloved congregation with humble and with grateful hearts. All glory, praise and honor be to Thee, dear Father. Thou hast seen fit to bless our feeble efforts to be of service to Thee in Thy Kingdom. Thou hast given to our fathers before us and to us all grace and power and faith and love from on High. We thank Thee for the Faith of our Fathers and Mothers who founded and continued this church of Thine. We thank Thee that we too have learned to know Thee and that we have been privileged to come to Thee. And now we pray for Thy great mercy upon us as we celebrate One Hundred Years of Service. Wilt Thou be with us, guard us from the thought of a mere celebration. May our Centennial Service inspire us to greater faith and bring into our hearts greater zeal. May our dear church live on in humble, devoted service. Bless us dear Father as we worship Thee. Comfort our sick and sorrowing; help those in need. Grant us open hearts to hear Thy Holy Word and willing hands to carry on. We ask it all in Jesus Name. Amen.



# THE HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

## "A CENTURY OF TRIUMPHANT FAITH"

### Chapter I

#### HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The first Lutherans came to Canajoharie in the eighteenth century. For among those early pioneers who settled in the Mohawk Valley from 1723 onward were undoubtedly many Germans who were followers of Martin Luther. Heinrich Schraemling, a Palatine, arrived at Canajoharie about 1730 and kept a tavern, store, and mill. Johannes Roof (Roaf), a Swabian, came here in 1778 and ran a famous tavern. They may have been Lutherans. Germans and Hollanders occupied this settlement and joined in the welcome to General George Washington on his visit August 1, 1783. The place was known for a time as Roof's Village, but growth and progress were slow until 1824 when the Erie Canal was built through the lower part of the village. There were only twenty houses here in 1813. After the completion of the canal Canajoharie grew more rapidly in population. In 1839 the village became incorporated, and in 1841 there were one hundred houses.

Descendants of the pioneer Lutherans and other Protestants built a wooden church near the canal in 1818. This was a congregation of various faiths over which presided for nine years the Rev. George B. Miller, D. D., who was later called to the principalship of Hartwick Seminary. The services of this church were conducted in the English language.

It seems, however, that a group of German-speaking Lutherans had settled here, mechanics, craftsmen, millers, farmers, brewers, boatbuilders, and merchants, and that they were not attracted to any of the English-speaking churches of the village. Bound together by a language, faith, and interests that had their common origin in the Fatherland, they determined to worship God, to hear the Divine Word, and to receive the Christian sacraments in a religious organization of their own. They met in private dwellings on Sundays, sang from the hymn-books they had brought with them, heard one of their number read a printed sermon, and probably reviewed Luther's Small Catechism on which they had been nurtured from their youth up. In 1834 the existence of this primitive organization became known to the Home Mission Committee of the New York Ministerium. This Lutheran Synod was founded in 1786, and its territory extended beyond the Empire State to New Jersey, New England, Canada, and other States. It decided to come to the assistance of the Germans at Canajoharie and sent to them a pastor in the person of the Rev. John Eisenlord, who was laboring not many miles away.

Pastor Eisenlord came to Canajoharie from his residence at Fort Plain on the 18th of January and also on the 1st and 15th of February, 1835, to announce to these Germans "that they should gather at that place where it had been their custom to meet for worship, on the last Sunday in February at two o'clock in the afternoon, to consider the advisability of organizing themselves into a congregation, to select a name for the same, and to elect elders and deacons, so that provision might be made for the conduct of divine services regularly and for the support of the pastor". He reported that "when the appointed time arrived, they came together in their place of worship and thereupon decided to organize themselves into a congregation, in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be known as St. John's

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canajoharie, Montgomery County, N. Y." At this first meeting they elected Carl Scharf and Carl Sauerland trustees for the current year, and thought it best not to elect elders until the next annual meeting, viz., on the first of January 1836.

The number of Germans attending this first meeting is not known, but on the following Easter Sunday, April 19th, and Pentecost, June 7th, sixty-two men and women communed and were enrolled as charter members. Rev. Eisenlord recorded their names as follows:—Mr. and Mrs. Carl Ebeling, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Heinrich, Mr. and Mrs. Boetho, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lieber, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Sauerland, Ernest Sauerland, William Sauerland, Mr. and Mrs. Rehbater, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Mueller and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig Hundertmark, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Schwertfeger, Andrew Lieber, Rudolf Roge, Henry Strassman, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Heeren, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Dorbaum, Henry Linsener, Elizabeth Scharf, Carlo Ebeling, Mr. and Mrs. Adam Hofmeister, August Willig, Mr. and Mrs. George Burghart, Fred Kraft, his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Schrader, Mr. and Mrs. William Wasmuth, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Kraft, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Scharf, Mr. and Mrs. August Steingreber, Carl Strassman, Henry Kraft, Franz Ohle, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Heise, and Mr. Grebe's daughter. \*



View of Canajoharie in 1840

—L. S. S.

In the year 1825 Andrew Jackson was in the White House for a second term as the seventh President of the United States. Since 1825 Europe had sent thousands of immigrants across the Atlantic to America, where, in this Land of Promise, they had sought economic betterment. The country was enjoying expansion and progress in commerce, industry, and agriculture. The cause of religion was prospering and churches were being built everywhere. And so one can readily understand that newly organized congregations enjoyed every prospect of growth and success. The future certainly looked bright for the German Lutherans of Canajoharie. Already in 1836, the next year, twenty-five souls were added to the infant congregation, making a total of eighty-seven, exclusive of children.

\* Also William Shasoman, Mr. & Mrs. Conrad Shasoman, William Hilke, and Justus Miller.

Chapter II

JOHN EISENLORD, THE FOUNDER

Let us pause for a moment to become better acquainted with the clergyman who organized the pioneer fathers into a congregation. It is Pastor John Eisenlord, or Johannes Eisenlohr, as he signs himself, who links up St. John's Church with the famous Battle of Oriskany (August 6, 1777) in which General Nicholas Herkimer won a decisive victory in the Revolutionary War. In this battle Major John Eisenlord I was engaged and lost his life at the age of 40 years. This patriot, a grandfather of the minister, came to America from Wurttemberg, Germany, about 1765 and resided in the Palatine district. He was a young man of considerable wealth, and a fine scholar, we are told. He was a member of the Tryon County Committee of Safety and fought in Col. Jacob Klock's regiment at Oriskany. His son, also named John, was born in 1776. His tombstone declares that he was captain of the 5th Regiment of Artillery of the State of New York, a member of the Assembly 1813-14, and the Sheriff of Montgomery County from 1811-1817. This John Eisenlord, Esq., the father of the pastor, died in February 1836 at the age of 66 years. He resided in the Minden district on the south side of the Mohawk River on a farm some two miles west of Fort Plain. Here, in the farmhouse that still stands on the lower river road, was born on August 23, 1793, John Eisenlord III. His mother was Catharine Strayer. He attended Union College at Schenectady and was graduated in 1822. He was licensed to preach by the New York Ministerium in 1828, and he was ordained to the Gospel ministry the following year.<sup>2</sup> At Hallsville, south of Fort Plain,



Gravestone of the First Pastor  
Rev. John Eisenlord, 1793-1860

stood the "Geissenberg" church, dedicated 1805. To this congregation he was called as preacher, and it was during his pastorate there in 1835 that he became interested in the German Lutherans of Canajoharie and assisted them in the founding of their congregation. Thus, through the illustrious Eisenlord family, St. John's Church may trace its ancestry to the German patriots who fought valiantly under General Herkimer in the War for Independence. Rev. Eisenlord married Maria Fox, who died December 12, 1847. Their sons, Alonzo, Ambrose, and Peter, were surgeons and physicians. John and James were farmers with good educations. One daughter, Mary Elizabeth, died December 7th, 1838, aged 30 years.<sup>3</sup> This generation of Eisenlords was active in the Stone Arabia district.

Rev. John Eisenlord ministered to the Canajoharie Germans from February 1835 to the spring of 1836. The exact reasons for his short pastorate are not known, but it is likely that his presence was needed at home, his father having died in the winter of 1836. Here at the family homestead he erected a pulpit platform and

<sup>2</sup> Graduated at Hartwick Theol. Seminary in 1829. One of the founders of the Hartwick Synod in 1830. See records of Geissenberg Church for further information.  
<sup>3</sup> James, Anna, and Catharine also his children.

preached to his neighbors. It is said that in later years he conducted a store in Palatine Bridge. On November 17, 1830, at the ripe age of 85 years, he passed to his everlasting reward. He lies buried in the little cemetery situated to the west of the farmhouse midst the members of his family. A handsome monument in the form of an obelisk surmounts the grave. On its base are four inscriptions, each representing one generation. An ornamental iron fence surrounds the tree-shadowed burial plot. Eisenlord saw the present church built and rejoiced in its progress. May the members of the St. John's Church always revere the memory of this pioneer pastor who founded it a century ago!

### Chapter III

## THE CHURCHLESS CONGREGATION

A beginning having been made and the prospects being most bright at the time, the little band of believers called a successor to the founder and took steps to secure a place of worship. For some months a Pastor Dieffendorf ministered to their spiritual needs. In September 1836 the Rev. Edward Meyer received a call. This man preached for the first time on September 18th, probably in the home of Ludwig Hundertmark where meetings were frequently held. Here on Sunday, November 20th, the first members met again to elect a church council. They chose Frederick Otto, Daniel Zoller, Dr. Lebbena Doty and Ludwig Hundertmark to be trustees. Furthermore, it was resolved from that time on to hold services in the Academy, and to pay two shillings for this privilege every Sunday. The schoolhouse was built in 1824 and stood on West Hill near the present site of the grade school. The schedule of Sunday services provided for worship in German from 12 to 1:30 P. M. and in English from 3 to 4:30 P. M. Wisdom and foresight were evident in this arrangement. Had this policy of two languages been followed through all later years, St. John's might have enjoyed an even greater measure of success. However, these pioneers had other problems beside that of language to contend with. There was the question of finances. The members, though poor, were thrifty and industrious. Collections at twelve services, as the records from April 19 to October 11, 1835 show, amounted to a total of \$1.83. Contributions were made in shillings and pence, but in 1835 yearly subscriptions first began to be paid in dollars. In the meantime, however, the young congregation suffered reverses because of the financial panic of 1837. Pastor Meyer reported to the Synod, that many mechanics of his flock had moved away, due to unemployment. Those remaining were not able to support a pastor, and Rev. Meyer resigned in 1839.



The Academy on West Hill

On May 12, 1839 the Rev. Christian W. C. Schmitz held a trial sermon and received a unanimous call. The new list of members contained seventy-seven names, the number commencing that year was ninety-two. Also in 1839 the first record of

a confirmation appears. In this class were Wilhelmina Strassman, Charlotte Willig, and Sophia and Wilhelmina Dorbaum. During his pastorate here Rev. Schmitz officiated at fifty-eight baptisms, fifteen confirmations, forty-six marriages, and nineteen funerals.

The congregation continued to worship in the Academy for some time, but took the first step toward acquiring its own church building in 1839 by purchasing a lot on East-Hill on lands owned by one Mitchell and known as the "cedar lot". At that time these lands were bounded by Montgomery St., Maple Ave., and Moyer St. A few houses, groves of cedars and pines, a swamp, and a quarry occupied this large triangle of land. The early erection of a chapel was hoped for, but the faithful ones had to wait five years for this dream to be realized. On November 19, 1840, a disastrous fire consumed sixty buildings, made homeless forty families, and damaged property to the extent of \$150,000. Some members suffered loss, but in 1841 a total of one hundred and thirty persons were still communing at St. John's Church.

On October 23, 1842 the Rev. Christian Schmitz was succeeded by Rev. George Saul. He came from Albany to take charge of both the Canajoharie and Fort Plain congregations. Attacking the problem of building a church with commendable zeal. Pastor Saul and his flock proceeded to make certain changes in the organization of the congregation. At a meeting on February 20, 1844 a constitution was drawn up, no doubt the first, but also notable for the fact, that henceforth the name of the church should be "the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canajoharie, Montgomery County, N. Y." It was so incorporated. The name "St. John's" was dropped and interest in English services ceased. The pastor, three trustees, and two deacons, comprised the church council. The duties of these officers were defined. One trustee was to be the treasurer and the pastor was to be the secretary. At this meeting Christopher Schrafer, Frederick Otto, and Carl Scharf were elected trustees, and Ludwig Hundermuth and Carl Ebeling became deacons. It was also voted to introduce the "Common Service Book" published jointly in 1842 by the Synods of New York and Pennsylvania.

#### Chapter IV THE FIRST CHURCH

A month before this meeting of February 20, 1844 it was decided to build a church. Subscriptions were to be received from the members and the general public. Two lists of subscribers were prepared, one headed "German Names", the other "English Names". Those who pledged money promised to pay as follows: "We, the subscribers, agree to pay to a Building Committee hereafter to be appointed, or bearer, the sums set opposite our respective names, for the purpose of building a Stone Church according to the plan hereto annexed, to be owned and used by the German Lutheran Church at Canajoharie. Dated January 29, 1844, payable in



The First Stone Church

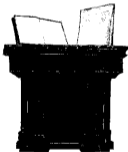


three payments, one-third when the side walls are up, and one-third when finished, and the balance in one year from the finishing and completion of said Church." The Building Committee consisted of Henry Carsten, Carl Scharf, George Pierre, Carl Ebeling, and George Riemenchneider. Several lists of subscribers are still extant, as well as a list of those who would pledge so many days of manual labor or offer horse and wagon for hauling at no cost to the church. Seventeen men offered eighty-four days of free labor. Unfortunately, the original plans have been lost, but a little woodcut of this first church shows its exterior appearance. At a meeting on March 2nd, it was decided to auction off the boards and the chips that remained after the woodwork was completed, and to use the proceeds of the latter toward the purchase of a pulpit Bible. This Bible is placed on the pulpit every year on the Sunday nearest the 20th of February, and from it the pastor reads his text.

Work on this little chapel, whose dimensions were 30 x 40 feet, was begun in the spring. Its stones were taken from a neighboring quarry. The entrance was on Montgomery St. and two windows on the east and west sides and two narrow windows in front let in the light. The gabled roof was topped with a ventilator and a chimney. Two rows of seats with an aisle between them, a plain pulpit covered with plush, a melodeon, a stove, and a table made up the furnishings. There was no altar. The entire cost of the church was to be \$1,000. Of this sum \$700 was raised by the time of its dedication. The members responded liberally, the highest sum subscribed was \$40.00, the lowest \$1.00, princely sums in those days! The community also gave liberally.

On the 25th of June this neat, little church was dedicated to the glory and worship of the Triune God. The Rev. Henry L. Schmidt, D. D. of New York performed the act of dedication, and we can be certain that the faithful and active workers rejoiced to see this first sanctuary which they could call their own, and that they were grateful to God Who had crowned their labors and prayers with success. Proud of their church and eager to insure its upkeep, they decided in July to rent all pews for one year, the same to be paid quarterly in advance. For half of a large pew or all of a small one the rental was \$2.00 a year. The proceeds were to pay off the debt of \$300 still on the church. Furthermore, the Council was to make every effort to raise one hundred dollars a year for the pastor, and failing this, the deficit was to be paid out of the pew rentals.

In August of this eventful year of 1844 a Sunday School was organized. Sessions were to be held at two o'clock in the afternoon. The first superintendent was Carl Ebeling, who, with August Mueller, Franz Ohle, and Ludwig Hundertmark, taught the children. In addition to the morning service and Sunday School, the congregation assembled every Sunday afternoon at three for a song service. Here new hymns were to be learned with the help of a



Pulpit of First Church with  
Century Old Bible and First Book  
of Records

black slate on which the notes were written. The first child to be baptized in this church was Charles W. Scharff who is still living.

During this year the congregation also applied for admission into the Ministerium of New York. Up to this time it had been independent of any Synod, but the conclusion was reached that synodical connection was desirable. Besides, the debt on the church must be paid and financial assistance was urgent. Pastor Saul had consented to the renting of the church to the Universalists for the purpose of raising money. This act displeased the Synod. The application for admission was made conditional upon the congregation's disavowal of all relations with heretical sects, and its request for a new pastor—Saul having resigned—was to be considered carefully by the Executive Committee of Synod. Apparently the Canajoharians disapproved of this action of the Synod. They turned to the Hartwick Synod (organized October 27, 1830 at Schcharis) for a pastor, and in 1846 the church was received into membership in this body.

### Chapter V

#### THE HARTWICK PERIOD

The Hartwick Synod sent Frederick William Poeschke to fill the vacancy. He arrived in November 1844 and was engaged for one year, but seems not to have remained longer than nine months. In September a resolution was passed to request the Synod to take up a collection in its parishes for this church. The same month Carl Ebeling was appointed to collect in the neighboring churches so that the debt might be reduced. These thrifty Germans hated debts and were anxious to be rid of them. Before the end of 1845 another Hartwick preacher by the name of Adolf Frederick A. Rumpf had assumed pastoral oversight of this flock. Rumpf also served the Stone Arabia congregation. While he remained there until 1854 and returned from 1857 to 1865, he, for some reason, left the Canajoharie charge in 1848. In February of that year, Carl Frederick August Poche succeeded Rumpf. It was still the custom to call a pastor for one year, and from now on, subscriptions for the support of the minister were to be solicited every year. It was also voted to reimburse Ernest Strassman with the sum of eight pence for each time that he cleaned and heated the church. Pews were auctioned off for the year 1849-50, and \$77.25 were thus realized, five members promising to pay \$5 for the year. In the summer of 1851 the congregation was again without a shepherd, and attempts were made to have Rumpf return, but he refused. Thereupon the Rev. J. Henry G. Roell, another member of the Hartwick Synod, was engaged to preach from October 1, 1851 onward for one year. Delegates were still sent to this Synod, although the congregation remained but loosely connected with it. Roell endeavored to force his flock into closer relationship with the Hartwickians, nevertheless, the congregation refused to sign that Synod's constitution. Its name is absent in the records of this Synod during the 1850's.

In November 1851 a melodeon was purchased for the sum of \$125, blinds were placed on the windows, and new communion ware was ordered to be bought. 1853 the pastor was to receive a salary of \$225 and the sexton \$7.58 for a year's labor. In October of that year a motion to join the Hartwick Synod was lost, and Pastor Roell tendered his resignation.

At St. Mark's Lutheran Church, a few blocks distant, the Rev. Reuben Dederick a member of the Hartwick Synod, was, since January 1, 1853, the pastor. On July 4, 1854 the German Lutherans requested him to be also their shepherd in spiritual things. He consented to do this, and he remained until the spring of 1856.

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Chapter VI

MUELLER'S FRUITFUL MINISTRY

The congregation now turned to the Moravians for a pastor, and Valentine Mueller consented to serve them. He commenced his ministry in April 1856, and Moravian officials also installed him into office.

In spite of the frequent changes in pastorates and the troublesome problems of finance, the congregation continued to enjoy a healthy growth. Immigration from Germany greatly increased after the wars of 1848, and the Eastern States received a considerable influx of Europeans. Many came to Canajoharie, and in 1856 the little, German church became too small for the growing congregation. Henry Schrader, Jacob Hadeler, and Henry Riemenschneider, composed a Building Committee which purchased additional land of Mrs. Gertrude Meyer and entered into a contract with Nelson Snyder for the enlargement of the original church. The new addition to the south end, 16 x 26 feet, was to contain ten new seats. The pulpit was to be moved to the south wall with the original short seats near it. Two more windows were to be installed on either side, and the masonry, floor, ceiling, and roof were to match the old church, all for the sum of \$155. By August 15, 1857 this work was to stand completed. It may be added, that this larger building boasted a gallery on the north end, to which stairs ascended from the entrance. In this gallery, we are told, were five or six rows of seats like bleachers. The pulpit stood on a platform, there was yet no altar, and the mezzodon stood to one side, while a stove filled the opposite corner.

This enlarged House of God, humble and simple as it was, gave the faithful band of Christians renewed hopes for the future. The labors, sacrifices, and prayers of the Schraders, Ebelings, Klinkharts, Hadelers, Iles, Millers, Riemenschneiders, Hundertmarks, Strassmann, Schuessmann, Groffmann, Sauerlands, Rosers, Cortes, Filmer, Dustermann, Shapers, Noltes, Winsmanns, Hildebrands, Scharfs, Steingraves, Kirschners, Zilgs, Arriens, Yops, Hammermiths, Weppers, Krafts, Hilkes, and many other faithful families, had borne fruit. Under the inspiring leadership of Pastor Mueller the congregation enjoyed expansion and progress. Word and Sacrament were faithfully attended, and, incidentally, the wafer was first introduced at Communion. In the five years of his busy pastorate here Rev. Mueller officiated at two hundred and twenty-eight baptisms, ninety-two confirmations, seventy-seven marriages, and sixty-nine funerals.

With pardonable pride the industrious pastor and his zealous flock read one day the following item in the "Rede" (June 17, 1858) "We do not intend to pass by unnoticed . . . the German Church. The Germans have been setting us good examples in more than one thing, but in none those which are more worthy of being imitated than in the steady, cheerful manner in which they come up to the support of their church, and the performance of its duties. This is the kind of fraternity we like to see; no noise, no display, no getting up in high places, no painted show of false pretensions. Honesty and faithfulness look well anywhere, but these are a kind of rare metal, somewhat like platinum, which you don't find in every sand bank."

The Rev. Valentine Mueller also deserves credit for establishing better relations between his congregation and the Ministerium. It was denied by the Canajoharians that they had ever joined the Hartwick Synod; nevertheless, in August 1856,



secretary Ernest F. Groffman was ordered to write for a letter of dismissal from this organization. In March 1860 certain influential members were still opposed to uniting with the New York Ministerium, although Pastor Mueller was received into its membership that September. However, two representatives attended the convention at Syracuse with their pastor, and upon hearing their report, the congregation voted to apply for membership in the Ministerium and to write up a Constitution satisfactory to the Synod. According to this document the congregation's name was to be "The Evangelical Lutheran German Church of Canajoharie". At the next meeting of the Synod at Rochester in September 1861 the congregation was accepted by the New York Ministerium. On April 1, 1862 Rev. Mueller resigned from his threefold parish, having organized a mission at Blecker, and also ministered at Fort Plain.

### Chapter VII

#### A BELL IS BOUGHT

The Rev. John David Haeger began his ministry here in October 1862. In connection with the local church he also preached at Blecker and Sprakers Basin. Rev. Haeger was a zealous advocate of home and foreign missions, and he introduced so-called mission festivals at which the evangelization of the unchurched and unregenerate was emphasized. At one such festival the sum of \$25.25 was collected for missionary purposes. During this time the old melodeon was sold to Charles Iise and a new organ was bought. Mrs. Joseph Esser became the first, regular organist and served most faithfully. In 1866 the building of a carriage shed and the purchase of a parsonage were considered. Adjoining lands were to be bought for these, and some even suggested that the church be further enlarged. In April 1866 Pastor Haeger accepted a call to Saugerties.

From 1861-1865 the Civil War was turning North and South against one another. The normal life of the country was seriously disturbed, and the churches tried heroically to sustain the morale of the citizenry. A number of young men from this church rallied to the defense of the Union. Two of them are still living and in good health. They are John Klinkhart, now 92 years of age, and Charles W. Scharff, who is 81 years old. Both have served their church and their country well. Among the remaining boys of St. John's Church were William Hompha, Gas Hillie, Theodore Martini, John Sehle, Dick Hammersmith, John, Charles, Harrison and Robert Ebeling, Gustave and George Klinkhart, Anthony Otto, Clark Sutherland, Charles, William and Andrew Hildebrand, Frank Schubert, Henry Bohne, and Charles Schultze.\* All these fought valiantly for the Union. On April 26, 1865 the funeral train of the martyred President, Abraham Lincoln, passed through Palestine Bridge, and many members crossed the river to see it go by.

The successor of Haeger was the Rev. Justus Herman Voss. He was promised a salary of \$300, plus donations and a suit of clothes. In April 1865 he began his work.

A local fire unit, the Deluge Engine Co., offered in April 1867 to pay \$100 toward the purchase of a bell, provided that the members of the church and other citizens contribute additional sums, and that the bell be used also as a fire alarm for the village. The offer was accepted, and about \$145 was raised by subscription. On May 3rd the bell arrived from the Jones Bell Foundry in Troy, and C. A. Ebeling was appointed sexton and bell ringer at an annual salary of \$17. The bell was hung in the little tower of the church and is still doing good service today.

\* *Alon Lewis Grape*

## Chapter VIII

### A LARGER CHURCH RISES

The long-postponed resolution to build a new church was finally passed on June 15, 1868. The new sanctuary was to be erected on the same site, and Charles Iise, Adam Rohl, and Carl Schrader were appointed to obtain pledges payable in three years.

Pastor Voss, for reasons of health, left Canajoharie in 1869 and the congregation felt compelled to seek another minister. The election of the Rev. Paul G. L. Matschet of Amsterdam followed on July 19, 1869. The minutes of February 19, 1870 reveal an interesting sidelight upon the duties of the sexton, Carl Ebeling, Jr., who for \$50 annually was expected to ring the bell for church and Sunday School services, heat the building and keep it clean, open the doors and lock them again, carry in wood and coal for the new stove, trim the oil lamps, and keep the church lot in good order. For tolling the bell at funerals he was to be paid extra by the mourners.

The congregation now felt able to undertake the building of a new and larger church. The first era of primitive beginnings was drawing to a close; a new era of expansion and spiritual advancement was dawning. The first step toward a greater church was the purchase of more land. From Mrs. Gertrude Meyer there was bought a plot of ground west of the property measuring 35 x 110 feet and another plot south of the church, 30 x 50 feet, making a total plot of 85 x 110 feet. The price was \$300. On this land it was proposed to erect a church, parsonage, and shed. Plans for a church in stone, one of brick, and another of wood, were to be submitted by the Church Council and a committee consisting of Jacob Hadeler, August Shineman, and William Scharff. A stone church with basement was decided upon, and whatever could be salvaged of the old church was to be used in the new. On May 9, 1871 the cornerstone was ready to be laid. "Ministers from adjacent cities and villages will be present", said the Canajoharie "Radius", "and the services will be made impressive by the vocalization of the Lyra Club and the Choir."



The New Church with Steeple. Built in 1871

We shall let the local newspapers tell us of the happy days of the cornerstone laying, building, and dedication of the new church:

"The interesting ceremony of laying the cornerstone of the new church edifice of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of this village, took place on Tuesday afternoon, when a large number of our citizens and of others from the neighboring country and villages assembled on the ground where the building will shortly be

erected. The Rev. Mr. J. U. Hoffman of Verona read the Scriptures and offered prayer. Then sermons were preached by Rev. A. Wetzel of West Utica, and Rev. Mr. Boettner of East Utica, followed by an address in English by Rev. N. West of Palatine, and prayer by Rev. Richard R. Williams of this village. The pastor of the church, Rev. Paul Matachat (before proceeding to the laying of the cornerstone) informed the large concourse of people of the contents of the stone, which were as follows: A copy of church documents, including names of members and of contributors to the new edifice, list of the officers, etc., a copy of the Bible in German, a German hymn book, Almanac, Canajoharie "Radli", Luther's Catechism, religious papers in English and German, specimens of the currency of the country, both specie and paper, National and State statistics, etc., etc. After the above were deposited in the stone, it was laid in a solemn and appropriate manner by Rev. A. Wetzel. The ceremony, as conducted by this church was new to many who beheld it. After the stone was accurately in place, as tested by plumb and level, that it might indeed be a tried cornerstone, each of the ministers, of whom there were many present of different denominations, assisted in its consecration by striking it three times with a hammer, repeating the words, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". After other brief exercises the assembly was dismissed with the benediction by Rev. A. Wetzel. After praising the singing of the Lyra Club the paper continues: "We are glad to be able thus to chronicle the beginning of another new church which will be, no doubt, a credit to the German portion of our citizens, and an honor to our village. They have certainly chosen a beautiful location, in our opinion, the finest in town. The best wishes of the whole community are with the people of this church and their energetic pastor in this important enterprise, and they are to be congratulated on the favorable auspices under which their new edifice, larger, more elegant, and more imposing, is begun. May it long stand to send forth its influence for good through this community, and to point our people heavenward".

On July 29th the outside walls were completed, by September 9th the steeple was finished, and by November 19th the basement was ready for use, the newspapers reported. During the construction of the new church the Academy on East Hill was used for worship purposes. On January 11, 1872 the local press stated, "that the new organ built by John G. Marklove of Utica, for the society of the German Lutheran Church, has recently been set up. It has twelve stops, is 9 feet wide, 7 feet deep, and 15 feet high, cased in chestnut, with black walnut trimmings, and makes a fine appearance. Withal it has great power as well as sweetness of tone, and is a most desirable instrument. Its cost was about \$1,100". Other inside work was done through the winter months, but before the new church was completed and ready for its dedication, Pastor Matachat resigned. His successor, Rev. Franz Bernhard Cunz, commenced his labors on November 19, 1871.

The dedication of the completed edifice took place on Wednesday, February 7, 1872 at three services held at 10 A. M. and at 2 and 7 P. M. The local press published the following accounts:

"The day dawned brightly and beautifully, filling many hearts with joy. At an early hour the spacious audience room was well filled with eager and interested listeners. The services of the morning commenced at 10 o'clock with an organ voluntary (Prof. Reuter of Amsterdam was guest organist) and the anthem, "The Day of the Lord" (by the Lyra Club). The dedication service was performed by Rev. A. Wetzel of Utica, assisted by Rev. C. H. Thompson of Syracuse. An appropriate sermon was preached by Rev. L. H. Gerndt of Utica from Psalm 27:4. A collection



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Chapter IX

PROGRESS DESPITE PROBLEMS

Rev. Cune left Canajoharie in the spring of 1872, and the Rev. John U. Hoffman became his successor. He was to receive a salary of \$500 and donations, and the sexton, \$75. Pews which had rented for six, eight, and ten dollars were now to cost fourteen, eighteen, and twenty-two dollars in order to meet a budget of \$1,200. The congregation realized that standards in the financing of churches were being raised and that contributors must give more than heretofore to maintain organized religion. Though the need of a parsonage had been keenly felt for years, the frequent change in pastors being partly due to this disadvantage, the congregation felt unable to provide a manse so soon after the erection of a new church. The ministers were, therefore, compelled to seek lodgings wherever they could, an arrangement which often proved unsatisfactory to both pastor and people. Rev. Hoffman was followed on June 15, 1878 by Herman Henry Frederick Hartwig, a graduate student just out of the seminary. During his pastorate efforts were made to revive the Men's Society. In 1879 the trustees insisted before the Synod that their church was not named St. John's but German Evangelical Lutheran Church. That the congregation, however, was on the best of terms with the Synod is evident in the fact, that an invitation was extended by Pastor Hartwig and his people to hold the 87th annual convention of Synod in Canajoharie, June 3-8, 1880. The Rev. Philip Krug, President of the Ministerium, and eighty-eight ministerial and lay delegates received a hospitable welcome in the new church as well as in the homes of the members.

While referring to the new church it might be pertinent to add, that the trustees were conscientiously concerned in reducing the debt thereon, and besides this, they were also troubled about church funerals. The casket was permitted to be brought into the basement auditorium, but not upstairs, and the rites for the dead could be recited in either part of the new church, as the family wished. In later years, however, bodies were carried into the sanctuary. Undertakers now conveyed the deceased to the cemetery, but for a number of years after 1831 the village owned the hearse that was used at all funerals. The liturgy of the Sunday service seems also to have been debated from time to time. In 1863 the Conference suggested that a liturgical order of service be continued, even though the responses be omitted. The "Kirchenbuch" of the General Council appeared in 1877, and in 1880 it was introduced here, after which the congregation had no more trouble in singing the service. Hartwig resigned in the spring of 1883 to accept a call to Albany.

In the summer of 1883 the Rev. Frederick Stuecklin came to Canajoharie. After his arrival the trustees were ordered to rent a house for the minister for three to five years. Stuecklin handed in his resignation in December 1884, and the congregation again turned to the Philadelphia Seminary for a minister. Upon his graduation in 1885, Hugo John William Hoffman assumed charge of this church. After a short but successful pastorate he accepted in May 1885 a call to his father's church in Albany. The congregation was reluctant to let him go, and found in F. C. Rudolph Luehrs a satisfactory successor. In 1888 it was voted to conduct an English evening service once a month. An altar and baptismal font were presented to the church by a society of young ladies. The financial situation requiring immediate attention, all past methods of money-raising having failed, the congregation resolved to introduce the envelope system. After Pastor Luehrs' departure for Jersey City, Alfred B. P. Krause officiated for a few months as pastor.

## EXPANSION UNDER KIRSCH

On May 1, 1891 the Rev. John A. W. Kirsch assumed charge. Under his able leadership steady progress in material matters and continued growth in spiritual things can be recorded. Both he and his flock felt honored to have the Synod hold its 98th annual convention in Canajoharie. Every comfort was provided for the guests, and all the facilities of their church were placed at the disposal of the delegates. Twice before had the congregation entertained the District Conference, so that the loyalty and co-operation of this church with the Synod in all its efforts to advance the Kingdom of God were unquestioned. The congregation had learned, that such a harmonious relationship was a desirable arrangement and a real blessing to both. For many years Mr. Fred Shinneman represented the church as delegate at Synodical and Conference sessions.

Plans for the worthy celebration of the 60th anniversary began to be made in August 1894. Pastor Kirsch proposed to raise a free-will offering by an appeal to all former catechumens as one means of defraying the cost of renovating the church for the jubilee. The congregation voted to improve and to beautify their beloved sanctuary for the occasion, and the following men constituted a Committee on Redecoration: Rev. J. A. W. Kirsch, Joseph Roser, William Miller, William Waner. These members were elected by the congregation. Additional members, provided by the board of trustees, were Charles G. Schrader, Harrison Abaling, and Amos Klinkhart. Gifts to cover the expense of improving the exterior of the church, such as the roof, were to be solicited by J. George Brown from those members who had been confirmed in Germany. The frescoing of the interior was done by the firm of Frank and Emil Allewelt of Syracuse. Their father had been engaged twenty-three years before to decorate the new church. Other improvements were turned over to local workmen. Except for the frescoing of walls and ceilings, no changes were made in the church proper, the chancel and pews were left as before. The service of rededication was held June 2-4, 1895. Pastor Kirsch describes the festivities as follows: "The celebration of the rededication of the renovated church and the 60th jubilee of the congregation passed without any jarring note and was favored with the finest weather. A joyful, festive spirit reigned during the three days of the observance, and long will the beautiful services be remembered by the jubilating congregation. The anniversary address was delivered by the Rev. Gottlieb C. Berkemier, D. D. of Mt. Vernon, N. Y. (Warburg Orphan Home). Others who spoke at the various services were Rev. J. A. W. Kirsch, who performed the rite of rededication, Rev. H. W. Hoffman of Albany, Rev. William M. Baum, Jr., D. D. of Canajoharie, Rev. H. H. Hartwig of Lyons, Rev. G. A. Bisdemann of Utica, Rev. F. Leddin of Sangerties, Rev. William Kuchler of Utica. The Lord of His Church preserve the faith and unity of this His congregation for the sake of her temporal and eternal welfare." For this occasion \$500 was contributed by those confirmed in this church and \$80 by those confirmed in Germany, a total which more than covered the cost of the improvement.

Beside the renovated church which the congregation now had in 1895, it also possessed since 1892 a residence for its pastor. In March of that year the Ladies' Aid Society inquired whether it might purchase a parsonage and asked for the advice and assistance of its fellow-members. The trustees appointed H. Shinneman and A. Klinkhart to help the ladies in this undertaking. A commodious, frame house at 46



Rev. Val Mueller  
1856-63



Rev. J. D. Haager  
1862-65



Rev. J. H. Voss  
1866-69



Rev. F. G. Manschot  
1869-71



Rev. J. U. Hoffman  
1872-74



Rev. H. H. Hartwig  
1875-82



Rev. H. W. Hoffman  
1883-85



Rev. F. R. Lushin  
1885-88



Rev. J. A. W. Kirch  
1891-96

Orchard Street, three blocks from the church, met with general approval and its sale was transacted. Rev. Kirsch and his people rejoiced that after many years the church could boast of a fine parsonage.

St. John's Church of Buffalo was desirous of obtaining the services of Pastor Kirsch and in March 1890 it sent him a call. The Canajoharie church did not consent to his leaving this field and the pastor remained. When, two months later, the Buffalo church again sent him an urgent call, he felt constrained to accept. This time his congregation permitted him to go in peace and testified to the faithfulness and conscientiousness with which he had labored among them for five years. The following July a call was extended to the Rev. August Elias Schmitthenner of Corona, L. I. and in August he began his ministry here.

## Chapter XI

### FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

During the pastorate of Rev. Schmitthenner English services were held on the second and fourth Sunday evenings of the month. The old custom of charging a new member an "admission fee" was discontinued in 1900. This fee had been as high as \$15. The list of voting members contains at this period, besides names already given above, the following family names: Borgert, Ehrhardt, Fisk, Frosch, Frank, Eberle, Gebauer, Fradericks, Henneman, Groff, Barahied, Hoffman, Konemund, Hess, Haut, Kase, Henk, Schwedtes, Wagner, Waser, Schrell, Schultz, Wienske, Rode, Wetterau, Norman, Schwabrow, Naegels, Rutishauser, Neamon, Nistman and Slaper.

In 1897 Rev. Schmitthenner and his flock observed the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the present church. The clergymen who took part in this silver jubilee were Revs. H. Hartwig, K. Wolters, G. A. Bierdemann, Dr. E. Pick and J. E. Seegers. In 1898 the interior and exterior of the church were renovated. At the congregational meeting in January, 1903, the resignation of Pastor Schmitthenner was accepted with deep regret, since for seven years, he had served most capably and had so endeared himself to the people that they were very reluctant to have him leave for Mt. Vernon, his next charge.

The next pastor was the Rev. Charles Julius August Reichardt, who took up his duties in April 1903. The church was further improved in October 1903 by the installation of an electric light system costing \$325. Handsome chandeliers were hung in the church, and electric lights were placed in the arch and chancel. The necessity of introducing the English language more generally was now realized, and Amos Klinkhart's suggestion to conduct Communion services in English on the Sundays after Pentecost and New Year was adopted. English evening services had been held every Sunday since February 1903. In September of that year an English Sunday School class was organized. Pastor Reichardt was authorized in 1906 to translate the German Constitution into English and to order the printing of the same. Two years later, the Conference having approved of it, printed copies were made.

Plans to observe the 70th anniversary were first made at a meeting of the trustees in December 1904. The committee chosen to set the date of the celebration and to work out a suitable program consisted of Rev. Reichardt, Henry Shineman and J. George Brown. On Sunday, October 1, 1905 a German festival service was conducted at 10:30 o'clock, the Rev. J. Christian Kraemer of Saugerties preaching the jubilee message. At 2:30 P. M. the Rev. G. C. Berkemeier, D. D. of Mt. Vernon



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addressed the Sunday School, the Rev. C. F. Frank of Fort Plain addressed the Junior League, and the Rev. Krahmer spoke to the Bible Class at an English service. At 7:30 P. M. a union service was held in English and Dr. Barkmeier delivered the sermon. On Monday, October 2, at 7:30 P. M. the Ladies' Aid Society and the Luther League were addressed by former pastors, Rev. J. A. W. Kirsch and Rev. A. E. Schmitthenner. On Tuesday, October 3rd a congregational supper brought the festivities to a close. An anniversary booklet was published. It contained an "historical sketch" of the congregation, pictures of former pastors, the old and new churches, a congregational directory, and the programs of the anniversary services. According to this directory the church had 239 contributing members, also a number of associate members. The membership of the Ladies' Aid Society was sixty-two, the Luther League ninety-six, the Junior League forty-three, the Choir nine, the Mission Board five. The Sunday School had 18 officers and teachers, sixty-six scholars, and a Pastor's Bible Class with forty-one men and women members.

In August 1906 an offer to install new pews in the church at their expense was made jointly by the Ladies' Aid Society and the Luther League. The offer was accepted. The old, straight pews, partitioned in the middle, hard and uncomfortable, were removed. Two rows of curved pews, twelve in each row, with ends in a Gothic design, were installed. These new seatings made possible a wide aisle in the centre and narrower aisles on each side. Another change was the building of stairs from the pastor's room below to a place near the chancel upstairs. New carpet was also laid.

At the semi-annual meeting of the congregation in August 1907 it was voted to restore the original name of the organization, namely, St. John's (Skt. Johannes), which in 1844 was exchanged for another. In 1909 occurred one of those unfortunate incidents which look innocent enough at the time, but which may lead to deplorable results, unless wise, calm, and sympathetic judgments prevail. Several churches of the village decided to conduct union services on Sunday evenings, and St. John's council voted to co-operate. Criticism of this practice reached the ears of Albany Conference officials. They came to Canajoharie to advise the congregation against continuing this form of unionism. The congregation, however, was not disposed to take this advice, and at a meeting on January 4, 1910 it was voted to sever relations with the New York Ministerium. Pastor Reichardt's resignation, a few months after this unfortunate occurrence was accepted, and he left Canajoharie November 15, 1910. His pastorate of seven years and seven months had been the longest in the history of the congregation.

## *Chapter XII*

### A NEW ORGAN AND OTHER INNOVATIONS

Before Pastor Reichardt had left for Pennsylvania the President of the German Conference of the New York Synod offered his aid in securing a pastor. The congregation, without Pastor or Synod, had become the coveted object of attention on the part of other Synods. The Conference president was invited to preach in November. He recommended a Brooklyn pastor, the Rev. Paul John Pestke, B. D. He took up his duties here in February 1911, and he was installed by the Rev. W. Grommisch of the New York Synod. During Rev. Pestke's ministry the congregation arranged to conduct English morning services every other Sunday. The retention of German services over so long a period had proved to be a short-sighted policy, young people



Rev. A. E. Schmitz  
1890-1921



Rev. C. J. Reichardt  
1908-10



Rev. P. J. Fackler  
1811-14



Rev. J. S. Harold  
1911-18



Rev. H. B. Dickert  
1818-24



Rev. B. F. Steele  
1824-27

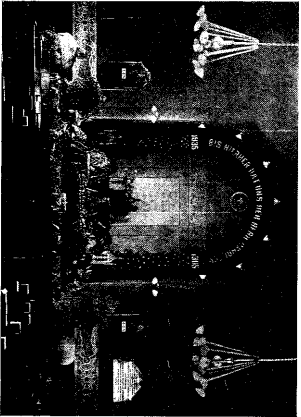
having been lost to other churches, thus splitting up families whose church membership should have been confined to old St. John's Church. Catechetical instruction and confirmation were now conducted in the language of America, and the minutes and records were also written in English. The custom of issuing a printed report of all individual contributions and financial reports of all organizations annually was begun.

Steps were taken at this time to procure a new and larger organ through the good graces of one of America's great industrialists and philanthropists, Mr. Andrew Carnegie. Negotiations were carried on with him by Elmer A. Shinsenman, whose administrative ability was a decided asset to the church council. Mr. Carnegie offered to present the church with \$875, provided the congregation raised a similar amount by March 31, 1912. A committee was appointed to solicit additional funds. In this group were Rev. Pestke, William J. Roser, Edward W. Shinsenman, Fred G. Waner, Laura Bierbauer, and Mrs. Joseph Roser. The sum of \$1,854 was secured, and with the Carnegie gift of \$875, plus \$300 allowed for the old organ, a total of \$3,029 was on hand. A fine, two manual instrument, made by the Bush Organ Company of Utica, was set up in a newly-constructed organ and choir loft at the rear of the church. Miss Laura Bierbauer, since 1883 the faithful and efficient organist of the church, continued her ministry of music on this new and better medium of religious worship. On March 17, 1912 the new pipe organ was dedicated.

In 1911 St. John's Church offered its auditorium for the Memorial Day service of the G. A. R. and for the baccalaureate service of the High School graduating class. These annual services rotate among the village churches ever since that time.

The duplex envelope system was introduced in 1913 for the purpose of increasing the financial income for church support and for benevolent causes. The annual Easter and Harvest Festival collections also added to the receipts. During this year the question of conducting all services in the English language was discussed. In the administration of Holy Communion certain changes involved the introduction of individual communion cups and the reception of the sacred elements by men and women together. Hitherto males and females had approached the altar separately. The new communion set was a gift of Mrs. Fred Shinsenman in memory of her husband who had served his church so long and well. The women also began to assert their rights as voting members, St. Paul's teaching, that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28) was long ignored by the masculine element of the Christian Church. At this period women in many countries were demanding universal suffrage. Fifty ladies of the congregation signed a petition asking for the right to vote and the necessary change in the Constitution making this privilege permanent. They got what they wanted, and it is well that they did, for what church could long exist without the indispensable counsel and support of its faithful Marys and Marthas?

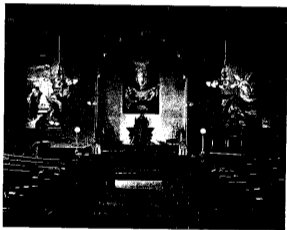
Rev. Pestke severed his connection with this church on September 1, 1914. Seven months later, April 1, 1915, the Rev. John S. Herold, a Canadian, assumed his duties as new pastor. Two months after his arrival application was made by the congregation for reinstatement in the New York Ministerium. At its annual convention in that year the Synod again accepted St. John's Church into membership, and the two organizations have enjoyed the most cordial relations ever since.



View of Chancel at 70th Anniversary



The 80th anniversary of the congregation was joyously observed September 29th to October 3, 1915. A handsome souvenir program was issued to commemorate the jubilee, and from this booklet we learn that on the anniversary committee were Rev. Herold (chairman), Edward Shinsman (secretary), John Klinkhart, W. J. Roser, William Waner, J. George Brown, Mrs. F. Hammersmith, Mrs. C. Showerman, Mrs. S. Waner, Mrs. S. E. Planck, Mrs. J. C. Riemenschneider, and Laura Bierbauer. Addresses were delivered by Rev. Hugo W. Hoffman, Ph. D. of Brooklyn, Rev. Franklin K. Press, Ph. D. of Easton, Pa. and Rev. G. C. Berkmeyer, D. D. of Mt. Vernon. Interior photographs of the church show several changes made since the 70th anniversary in 1905. Three large oil paintings adorn the front wall as memorial



Church Interior before 1905

gifts. In the centre is shown the Ascension of Christ, a memorial to Joseph Roser, Jr. by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Roser. On the right side the Angelic Announcement to the Shepherds is a picture given by Mrs. Lucie Hadelser in memory of her husband, William Hadelser. To the left is the Resurrection scene, presented



by Mrs. Anna Arriens in memory of her husband, Henry Arriens. The stone tablet, a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Carl E. Scharff, is still on the right wall. The chancel is unchanged, except that lights are placed at each end of the platform. A picture of the rear of the church shows the large pipe organ and the choir loft, a curtain along its length. The original windows of painted glass and divided into two parts by wooden mullions are also visible. In the fall of 1916 the exterior of the church was repainted, the roof underwent repairs, and a new chimney was built. Rev. Herold accepted a call to Ohio in October 1916. He was succeeded in December by the Rev. Henry Bruno Dickert who was stationed at that time at New Brighton, S. I.

### *Chapter XIII*

#### THE CHURCH ENTERS A NEW ERA

Let us digress for a moment to consider the fact that with the outbreak of the World War on August 1, 1914 a new age actually began for all Christendom. What had been thought impossible because of widespread enlightenment, culture, and civilization in the world, occurred when the leading nations of the earth became involved in a European war that inflamed every continent and threatened to overthrow civilization itself. The effects of such a mighty upheaval lasting four years were felt in the smallest hamlets and most distant communities. The village of Canajoharie responded most wholeheartedly and generously to the call of the Government for men and means to carry on the war. This church had sent some of its young men into the Civil War, and now the call to arms was heard again in the land and the following members saw service overseas or here in the States: Augustus Arriens, Carl Ebeling, Fred Ebeling, Eugene Fisk, Carl Frank, Clark Fredericks, Edward Hambrecht, Floyd Henneman, George Moldt, Charles Voght, Victor Voght, and Henry Wisnake.

The period which followed the great war revealed the effects of this universal catastrophe upon the faith and morals of thousands and showed how it had uprooted the idealism of pre-war years. The Church in America suffered a set-back in various ways, but since this country had profited commercially, so that she had many more millionaires than formerly, organized religion also profited materially, if not spiritually. Standards of living were elevated, and whereas the Church once raised thousands, she now raised millions of dollars. Costly churches were built, colleges were richly endowed, weekly contributions increased, and ministers received higher salaries. Men thought no longer in terms of the pre-war age, and this change in material well-being was experienced also in the village of Canajoharie. Here the Beech-Nut Packing Co. and its affiliates rose to new heights of expansion and prosperity, and the entire village shared in the unprecedented good fortune of post-war business, commerce, and industry.

In the midst of the war years the Lutheran Church in this country saw three historic Synods merge into the United Lutheran Church in America under the presidency of the Rev. Frederick H. Knobel, D. D. of New York. Further mergers and phenomenal growth were to follow. We shall see how the general trend of these prosperous years also affected our church.

At the opening of the year 1917 the New Common Service Book of the U. L. C. A. was introduced for use in the services. The 400th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation was duly observed here. Toward the \$100,000 campaign for Wagner Memorial Lutheran College the sum of \$1,029 was raised by this church. The former house of the pastor on Orchard St. was sold in 1918 to Mr. Paul Hansen for \$3,500, and the proceeds were wisely invested. A movement to acquire a new manse nearer the church was inaugurated. The Willing Workers offered to install new windows in the vestibule of the church. For the Sunday School rooms a new floor and stained-glass windows were provided and the walls were redecorated. A new Constitution was adopted. Mrs. Lucie Haddler, Mrs. Daniel Kirschner, and Mrs. Sophia Roser left substantial bequests to the church. Over a period of years other gifts and memorials had been donated to the church. Among these were the brass altar cross given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Kirschner, two silver collection plates presented by Rosera Riemenschneider in memory of her mother, two brass electric post lamps given by Mrs. Charles Shaper, two hymn boards "in loving remembrance of Julius H. Fredericks and his wife Louise Warner", a liturgical service book given by Charles Kaas in memory of his mother, black chancel hangings in memory of Mrs. William Schrell and given by her daughter Mrs. John Hime. The years 1918-1924 ended with substantial balances in all treasuries. The societies had prospered, and under the leadership of Pastor Dickert, the congregation and Sunday School had gone steadily forward to larger attainments. In 1920 the 85th anniversary was appropriately celebrated. Guest speakers were Rev. J. A. W. Kirsch and Rev. Paul Kasten.

Two new furnaces were installed in 1921. The financial secretary, William Miller, reported that the pledges toward current expenses for 1921 had increased 20% over those of 1920, and that the benevolent fund had more than doubled that of the previous year. The congregation willingly raised its apportionment of \$960.48 for Wagner College. Good will and good fortune had brought more prosperous days to old St. John's Church.

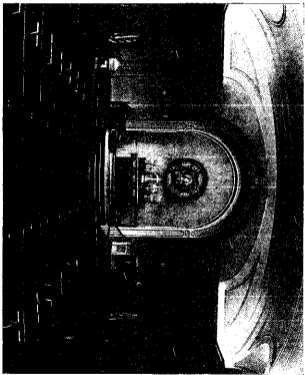
### Chapter XIV

#### A MARVELOUS TRANSFORMATION

We now come to one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by this congregation. Only the building of the present edifice in 1871 surpassed it in size and importance. In reality it was to become a monument to the faith, loyalty, courage, and enterprising spirit of the American-born sons and daughters of those hardy founders of the church whose cradle had stood in Europe. Firm had the foundation been laid by their fathers, and on this substantial groundwork the new generation continued to build upward and onward. Always proud of their church, they were determined to make it the most beautiful, reverent, and dignified sanctuary in the community to the glory of God and in honor of the generation that gave them birth.

In 1922 this project was launched. While the alterations were to be done mainly in the interior, it was decided to improve the roof and steeple first, so as to prevent possible damage to the remodeled auditorium later. Accordingly asbestos shingles were placed on the gabled roof, and the woodwork on cornices and tower was painted to insure the proper security against injury.

The Committee on Alterations now proceeded to the actual work of remodeling. Members of this group were Rev. Dickert, chairman; William J. Roser and Augustus H. Miller (of the Church Council), Laura Bierbauer (Ladies' Aid Society), Mrs. Sanford E. Planck (Willing Workers), Christina Carrwell (Luther League),



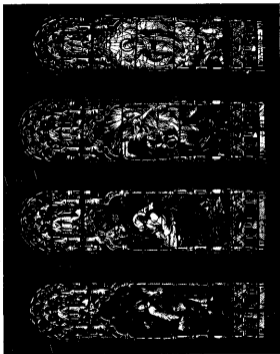
The Protestant Church in Leningrad



Edward W. Shineman (Men's Society), Elmer A. Shineman (ex officio). The committee secured estimates and devised a plan for the financing of this undertaking, and then engaged Mr. Linn Kinne of Utica, a competent architect, to submit designs for the interior. Mr. Kinne's drawings called for an auditorium in Old Colonial style with a curved ceiling, vaulted windows, paneled and pilastered walls, and a deep, arched chancel, the whole to be enhanced by handsome moldings and capitals and polished woodwork. The south wall was to be broken through and a two-story extension, to contain the chancel and a store room on the second floor, and a sacristy and Sunday School apse on the first floor, both connected by a staircase, was to be added at this end of the church. Walls and ceiling were to be decorated in soft and shaded tints with panels in stippled effect. All woodwork, such as sills, pews, organ cabinet, altar and chancel furniture, was to be finished in mahogany. The interior was to be illuminated by a system of indirect lights concealed behind moldings and arches. The floor was to be corked and carpeted with Axminster, the ceiling to be supported by curved, iron beams. A round window was to adorn the chancel, and a series of steps were to lead to the altar. A new pulpit was to be placed west of the chancel, and a pillared railing was to enclose the chancel space. Lectern and font were to stand on the east side. These specifications involved a decided change in the appearance of the dear, old church, but these alterations needed the added touch of love and piety, which only gifts and memorials dedicated to loved ones can lend, to give them the proper warmth and adornment.

Pastor Dickert was entrusted with the task of soliciting memorials, but to his delight the members came forward voluntarily with offers of such gifts. The Luther League, a most active society, contributed almost \$5,000, making possible the stone extension with its deeper chancel and enlarged Sunday School room, also the sacristy and its furnishings. It also gave fifty Common Service hymnals, Mrs. George A. Warner and Mrs. Charles B. Smith also presented gifts for the sacristy, the former a vestry mirror and the latter a table cover. The Sunday School paid for the installation of a new stained-glass window in the apse. Gifts for the church chancel and their donors were as follows: The altar of solid mahogany, the Men's Society to honor the Rev. Dickert; the carved pulpit, Augustus and William Miller (in memory of their parents); the brass lectern, Christina Carwell, Elizabeth Reamon, Bernhard Ehrhardt (in memory of the founders of the church); the marble font, J. O. Brown and family; two chancel chairs, Mrs. Charles Shineman and Florence Shineman (in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest F. Großman and Ernest T. Shineman); two chancel chairs, Mr. and Mrs. Julius V. Fredericks and family (in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Julius Fredericks); the pulpit Bible, Augusta Freeman; the lectern Bible, Fred W. Hammersmith; two brass altar vases, Mrs. Henry Henk; the missal stand and altar service book, Mrs. John Hartman (in memory of her husband); the offering plates, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Klemensschneider; a silver baptismal bowl, Mrs. Clarence N. Robinson and Louise Greff; communion vest and altar cloth, Mrs. Charles F. Dae; Sower vase, Mrs. Jacob Haberle; five sets of corded silk paraments in the liturgical colors, embroidered in gold, the Ladies' Aid Society.

Since 1871 the windows contained transparent glass painted in geometrical designs. These were now replaced by eight exquisite, stained-glass windows depicting outstanding events in the life of our Lord. Willing and generous donors volunteered to install them as memorials, and the Von Gerichten Ecclesiastical Studios of Columbus, Ohio, were ordered to execute them. The sequence of subjects from east to west and their donors are as follows: The Nativity, Mr. and Mrs. Menzo Russ;



The Windows on the West Side



Christ and the Doctors, the Bierbauer and Heiler Families; The Good Shepherd, children of Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Shimeman; Christ Blessing Little Children, memorializing Paul Waner, Helen Mowray, Caroline Fredericks, by their children; Christ and Peter on the Sea, Mr. and Mrs. William J. Roser, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Roser; Christ in Gethsemane, the Sanford E. Planck Family; Easter Morn, the Family of Valentine Waner; Christ's Ascension, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Minster and Family. The circular window above the altar, given by Mrs. Fred G. Waner and daughters, in memory of Fred G. Waner, is a portrait of Christ by Hofmann surrounded by a floral border. In the Sunday School room and lobby new windows with stained-glass medallions were installed. We need not list all the contractors who made possible this beautiful and enlarged House of the Lord, but will say that they did their work well. The cost of alterations and memorials was greater than the cost of building the present church in 1871, and amounted to approximately \$25,000, surely a princely sum to give to the glory of the Triune God and the beautification of His Holy temple! The method of raising the funds necessary for these improvements was four-fold: (1) by cash subscriptions; (2) by memorial gifts; (3) by bank loans; (4) by notes of \$10 at 4½% payable on demand.

The congregation rejoiced at this greater opportunity to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness and in the holiness of beauty. The larger and handsomer sanctuary exceeded all their expectations, and well it might, for they now possessed one of the finest and most churchly sanctuaries in the entire Mohawk Valley, if not in the State. Glad were they to dedicate this holy place, for "the glory of this latter house was greater than of the former".

Three services of dedication were held on Sunday, November 4, 1923. The visiting ministers gathered with Pastor Dickert and his happy people in the Sunday School rooms at 10:30 A. M. and marched in procession into the transformed church in the following order, first the clergy, then the Church Council bearing Bibles and sacred vessels, then the Committee on Alterations, the choir, and the congregation. Thrilled by the beauty and magnificence of their sanctuary, the worshippers entered wholeheartedly into the impressive service. Choir anthems, solos, and instrumental numbers enhanced the inspiration to praise and thanksgiving. Pastor Dickert preached the dedication sermon on the basis of Psalm 29:2 and performed the act of dedication. At 2:30 P. M. a Sunday School and Community Service followed a processional of the clergy, school officers, teachers, and pupils into the church. The musical program consisted of a tenor solo, a choir anthem, and a duet on cornet and violin. Rev. C. J. A. Reichardt read the Scripture lesson, and the address was given by Rev. J. A. W. Kirach, both former pastors. A service of praise at 7:30 P. M., preceded by an organ recital by Miss Bierbauer at 7 o'clock, drew a capacity audience. A chorus choir, contralto solo, and instrumental duet were heard. At this service the Scripture lesson was read by Rev. Kirach and Rev. Reichardt preached the sermon. The dedication offerings of the day reached the splendid total of \$2,140. On the following Wednesday evening a congregational banquet brought to a close the festivities of dedication.

During this eventful period, 1917-1923, the last vestige of the German language in the service and teaching of the church and the Sunday School disappeared entirely. The pastor and his flock desired their organization to be known as St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, and this has been its name ever since. In February 1924 Rev. Dickert received a call to Pittsfield, Mass. and on May 4th he began his ministry there.

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Chapter XV

FROM PROSPERITY TO DEPRESSION

After hearing several candidates, the congregation extended a call to the Rev. Reinhold F. Stolz of Brookville, Pa. who accepted and came to Canajoharie, Dec. 1, 1924. During Pastor Stolz's ministry here a bequest was received from Lewis Grape. A Women's Missionary Society was organized in 1925, largely through the efforts of Mrs. Stolz. In 1925 the congregation acquired a new parsonage nearer to the church than the former one. A modern, eight-room house, with garden and garage, situated at 55 Wheelock Street, was bought of Mrs. Wesley Dopp for \$7,500.



Present Parsonage on Wheelock St. Bought in 1925

Pastor Stolz and Mrs. Stolz and their three sons, Paul, John and James, moved into this fine parsonage soon after. After the village board had paved all the streets of Canajoharie, the church graded its curbing and sidewalks in 1925. The congregation in this year also voted for the merger of the New York Ministerium, the Synod of New York and New England, and the New York Synod, into the United Lutheran Synod of New York, and so instructed its delegates to the special convention of the Ministerium at Albany, November 10, 1925. It was voted to place the valuable records of this historic church in a secure place. Through Mr. Edward W. Shineman room was found in the safe of the Beech-Nut Parking Co., but later they were deposited in the vault of the Canajoharie National Bank.

The 90th anniversary was observed October 11, 1925. Pastor Stolz preached the anniversary sermon at the morning service, and several neighboring churches were invited to the Community Service in the evening. Rev. Raymond C. Diets of Johnstown spoke at this celebration. On Thursday, October 15th, a social evening was enjoyed by the various societies. At the morning service on October 18th the guest preacher was the Rev. Charles R. Myers, D. D., president of Hartwick Seminary, and at the reunion of confirmed members in the evening, the speaker was the Rev. Henry Dickert.

In the Wagner College Endowment Campaign of 1926 this church raised \$2,480 in pledges and subscriptions. Pastor Stolz consented in 1927 to preach at the Lutheran

Church in Freysbush and to campaign for funds in the Hartwick Seminary drive. In June 1927 he tendered his resignation, the same to take effect August 31, 1927. The congregation accepted it, and on September 1st he commenced his labors at Philadelphia.

On November 1, 1927 the Rev. Herman Frederick Vesper of Hudson entered upon his duties as pastor of St. John's Church. At that time our country was thoroughly enjoying the gilded days of "Coolidge prosperity". Wages and prices were high, stocks and bonds were booming, a mania for "bigness" in everything was widespread, and the golden age when "two cars should be in every garage" was apparently dawning. For 1927 the efficient treasurer, William J. Roser, reported total receipts by the Church Council as \$8,254.81. The income of the various societies and special funds was \$1,498.89. These were the days when special offerings and events added about \$2,500 to the income. In 1928 the congregation's receipts rose to \$9,992.07, and that of the societies and funds to \$1,899.86. Compared to the 27 shillings and 50 pence received during the first quarter of 1835 (at this rate 100 shillings and 200 pence, or \$15.50 for the year) the congregation had prospered considerably, and this difference in financial resources reflected the enormous growth of the country's wealth in the last century. America had grown rich since 1835, and even a village church could prove this to be true. In addition to the above sums raised during 1928, the congregation co-operated in the \$4,000,000 Ministerial Pension Fund Campaign of the U. L. C. A. and exceeded its quota of \$1,572 by pledging \$2,550.

A bolt of lightning struck the high steeple of the church on May 23, 1928, "chattering the ball top and weather-vane, casting pieces of wood, iron, and metal into the yards of the neighbors", as the "Courier" reported. Firemen could discover no fire, and the interior was not damaged. However, since the top of the steeple had been destroyed beyond repair, the congregation decided to tear down the remaining portion, and voted to replace the pointed structure with a top requiring little care and attention. The firm of Kinne and Frank of Utica was engaged to submit plans. Their design calling for a dome of copper, surrounded by eight copper urns on pedestals, and the whole surmounted with a gold cross, was unanimously accepted. Work was begun in the summer of 1928. The old steeple, erected in 1871, was taken down, the new dome was constructed, the belfry and all exterior woodwork were painted white, the chimneys were repaired, a system of lightning rods was installed, tin work and asbestos shingles were repaired. The cost of these improvements was \$2,532. On Sunday, November 11th, a special service of dedication was held, the pastor preaching on Isaiah 18:3 and Jeremiah 6:27.



The New Dome

The printed program stated, that "the new tower can be seen for miles around, and its classical Colonial style harmonizes better with the beautiful architecture of the auditorium. May the cross-crowned tower call sinner and saint to worship and continue to lift up eyes and hearts toward heaven, the eternal City of God." Thus transpired another notable dedication in our history.



On September 24-26, 1928 the Albany Conference of the Old New York Ministerium held in this church its last convention before the merger of the three synods, which took place the following June. The customary hospitality prevailed, and in attendance, enthusiasm, and good fellowship, the Conference exceeded the record of previous years.



The Choir Loft and Organ

In June 1929 the congregation sent Pastor Vasper and William J. Roser to the historic gathering of three New York State Synods at St. John's Church, Albany. Here was consummated the long-dreamed of merger of the old New York Ministerium, the New York and New England Synod, and the New York Synod. The consolidated body of 250,000 Lutherans, 450 pastors, 428 congregations, with a combined property valuation of \$25,000,000, became incorporated under the title of the United Lutheran Synod of New York. The new organization was divided into eight Conferences, our congregation being assigned to the Eastern Conference. The pastor returned as the first secretary of this regional group of eighty congregations. The first officers of the united Synod were the Rev. Samuel G. Trexler, D. D. of New York as President, the Rev. Paul A. Kirach of Buffalo (son of a former pastor) secretary, and Mr. Fred H. Wefer of New York, treasurer.

Later in June Canajoharie observed the 100th anniversary of its incorporation and the sesqui-centennial of the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition. An historic pageant was presented on the Shaper lot, and many of our members took part in this production. On Sunday morning a great outdoor church service was conducted on the pageant grounds, all village churches, with their pastors and choirs participating. A grand parade, band concert, and fireworks were further features of this joyous celebration which attracted thousands of persons from near and far.

In the same month the church was the recipient of a beautiful, silver and gold baptismal shell, the gift of Christina Carewell, and of a silver and silk book mark for the missal stand, the donor being Bertha Reamon. In December Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Roser graciously presented their beloved church with a handsome set of five stoles. Made of corded silk in the five ecclesiastical colors and embroidered with gold symbols, they were a fine addition to the pastor's vestments.



The year 1929 closed with substantial balances in the treasuries of the congregation and societies. The former had on hand December 31, \$527.73, and the total balance of the several funds and organizations amounted to \$1,458.87. Before the end of the year, however, the great financial crash had occurred and the age of post-war prosperity had come to a sudden and dramatic end. The so-called "depression" had begun, and though for a number of years to come the country was to suffer acute economic distress, Canajoharie was spared some of the worst features of unemployment, family relief, and general impoverishment. However, a new era of economy and scarcity could not help but affect also the churches.

### Chapter XVI

#### FORWARD THROUGH THE GLOOM

Our congregation went steadily forward in 1930. It raised the largest apportionment for benevolence in its long history, sending \$1,209 to the treasurer of Synod. It also sent away \$811 as unapportioned benevolence. The Constitution of 1919 was amended and brought up-to-date.

Extensive alterations to the Sunday School room, kitchen, and pastor's study included new flooring, redecoration, new equipment, and rearrangement, so that the entire basement of the church assumed an improved appearance.

St. John's Church also began to take a wider interest in the affairs of the Lutheran Church when one of its members attended the biennial convention of the United Lutheran Church at Milwaukee, Wis. William J. Roser was present at this gathering as an accredited delegate of the United Lutheran Synod of New York. The pastor was also delegated to represent his Synod, but could not attend. He was elected in that year to the Board of Trustees of Hartwick Academy.

On Sunday, November 9, 1930 the congregation observed the 95th anniversary of its organization at three impressive services. At the request of his people Rev. Veesper delivered the anniversary address at the morning service. His text was Psalm 92:12-14. The Rev. Herbert D. Shimer, D. D. of Schenectady brought the greetings of the Eastern Conference as its President. A special service of the Sunday School was held at 12 noon. Dr. Shimer addressed the children and orchestral selections added to the joy of this celebration. In the evening the congregation was honored by the presence of the esteemed President of the Synod, the Rev. Samuel G. Treaster, D. D. His message of congratulation, based on Exodus 16:15, was thankfully received. Former pastors who came to this jubilee service were Rev. J. Kirsch and Rev. H. B. Dickert. Their verbal greetings, together with the written felicitations of former pastors Reichardt, Schmitthenner, and Stolz, recalled the happy past. Congratulations were delivered in person by the following neighboring pastors, Dr. W. M. Baum, Revs. W. Workman, and S. Haverly. The musical program of the day was a notable contribution to the beauty and impressiveness of the services. The 95th anniversary committee members were Rev. Veesper, chairman, Elmer Shineman, Mrs. A. A. Arriens, Laura Bierbauer, and C. Paul Shaper.

In 1931 the village authorities had gas conduits installed in the streets. A gas stove was placed in the parsonage and a gas heater in its cellar. Material and spiritual progress continued. The services continued to be well attended, the societies labored faithfully, the sum of \$1,132 was sent to Synod for apportioned benevolence, and twenty-four persons were added to the membership.



While for a number of years St. Mark's and St. John's Churches had united for a joint Reformation festival service in October, a request was received this year from the Methodist and Reformed Churches asking whether they might not unite with the Lutherans in this service. In reply they were cordially invited, with the understanding however, that the custom of former years be continued, viz., the service to be held alternately in the two Lutheran Churches, the pastor of one church preaching in the other. On November 1 such a union service was held in St. John's Church. Rev. William Baum, D. D. preached to an audience that completely filled the church, the other ministers participating in the chancel services.

The entire community was shocked in the early part of 1932 by the sudden death of the Rev. William M. Baum, Jr., D. D., for almost half a century the beloved pastor of our sister church, St. Mark's. Seated at his desk on the night of February 5th, he was preparing his 49th anniversary address when the Angel of Death called him away. To the pastor of St. John's were turned over the arrangements for the memorial and funeral services. The first were conducted on Sunday night, February 7th, with seven ministers in the chancel. Funeral rites followed on Tuesday, February 9th, Revs. P. Kirsch, Posselt, Dickert, Dillenbeck, and Vesper, officiating. Interment followed the next day at Reading, Pa. Dr. Baum had often ministered to members of our church between pastorates, and in countless ways he had shown himself a sincere friend of our congregation. He belongs, therefore, to this church's venerable history. In April St. Mark's Church called the Rev. Frank Shimer of Harrisburg, Pa.

Sorrow and joy alternated in 1932 as in other years. On July 28th the village took part in a nationwide observance of the bi-centennial of the birth of George Washington. Members joined with other patriotic citizens in an elaborate parade featuring Colonial events depicted on numerous floats. Exercises were held in the square. Mayor Harry V. Bush portraying the first President. Already in February a Colonial costume party was held in the church basement, with music of Washington's day and a grand march in which eighty-five took part, as a local phase of this celebration.

Although the depression harrassed many churches during 1932, St. John's people could report a balance of \$218.55 in the church treasury at the end of the year, and the societies also had adequate sums in their coffers, all of which testified to their love and loyalty for their beloved Zion. The sum of \$850 was raised as apportioned benevolence. The Endowment Fund was increased to \$1,375 by bequests left to the church in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Shineman, Miss Elizabeth Shineman, and Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Goffman.

On Easter Sunday, April 16, 1932 a handsome, embroidered "fair linen" for the altar was given by Mr. and Mrs. George H. Shineman in memory of Mrs. Augusta Freeman. On Sunday, October 29th, a pair of beautiful, brass candelabra, each holding three candles, was on the altar. They were dedicated to the memory of Helen Wamer Miller (1909-1932) and were the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Allen Saul.

The year 1932 brought the economic slump in which the whole world had become involved to its lowest point. Yet the finances of the church did not suffer unduly. At the end of this year the church treasurer reported a balance of \$338.99. The sum of \$593 was sent to Treasurer Wefer of the Synod and \$109 was sent him for special collections.



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*Chapter XVII*

**LOVE NEVER FAILETH**

Photostat copies of the church records, covering the years 1835-1882, were made at the State Library in Albany. An Users' Association was organized with some two dozen young men as members. They have continued to function in this capacity most faithfully ever since, and they also assist the pastor at Holy Communion.

The year 1934 brought back improved economic conditions to the country at large, and the churches recovered somewhat from the slump of previous years. The cause of religion was loyally and generously supported by the members of this church. On Sunday evening, March 25th, the congregations of St. John's and St. Mark's churches joined in celebrating the 15th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Vesper. The pastor of the sister church Rev. Frank Shimer, was in charge of the service. The Rev. Frederick J. Baum, D. D. of Poughkeepsie, a brother of the late pastor of St. Mark's, delivered the principal address. Rev. Wilson D. Worman of Middleburgh also spoke, as did Rev. J. Karl Riehsell of Little Falls. These two churches also united on Ascension Day for a festival service and thus inaugurated a custom that should be continued in the future.



*Girls of the Junior Choir*

After Easter the pastor organized a Junior League of the members of the confirmation class. The baccalaureate service of the Canajoharie High School graduating class was held in this church in June. Such a service had also been held here in 1929.



The ministers of St. John's Church had in past years assisted weaker churches in their need and had rendered personal service to neighboring missions, as the records show. It was the privilege of Rev. Vesper to form the Starkville-Minden parish and to see it placed under the supervision of one pastor. He was also able to revive the congregation of the old, historic "Yellow Church" at Manheim in his capacity as chairman of the Rural Church Work Committee of the Eastern Conference. This church now has its own pastor. Thus our church has remained true to the traditions of former years, and, as the stronger church, has helped to bear the burdens of weaker ones.

Another notable anniversary occurred on November 4 when the Sunday School celebrated its 90th anniversary. The children and teachers marched into the church, conducted an appropriate service, and heard a fine address by the Rev. Paul C. White, Ph. D., Director of Religious Education in our Synod. For the last 25 years George H. Shäneman has been the capable superintendent of the school.

On August 1, 1934 Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Scharff observed the 58th anniversary of their marriage, and on December 4th Mr. and Mrs. John Klinkhart were married 67 years. Both couples were identified with St. John's Church for many years, and both gentlemen served their country well in the Civil War. Golden wedding anniversaries in recent years were celebrated by Mr. and Mrs. Edward J. Brown and Mr. and Mrs. John Hess. The pastor was present at these happy occasions to bring the congratulations of the church which these dear people had served so long and well.

#### *Chapter XVIII*

### THE FIRST CENTURY CLOSES

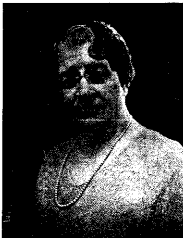
The Year 1934 closed with total receipts considerably above those of the two previous years. For benevolent causes a total of \$788 was raised, and for current expenses \$6,654. The treasuries of the societies contained good balances, and the Sunday School's finances were in excellent order. In his parochial report to the Synod for 1934 Rev. Vesper recorded accessions as follows: by infant and adult baptism 12; by enrollment in the Sunday School 6; by confirmation 16; by transfer 15. The baptized membership was reported as 465, the confirmed membership as 374, and the number communing as 237. The total membership of the six societies (of which there are more detailed reports elsewhere) was 369, and that of the Sunday School 112. The property of the congregation was valued as follows: Church edifice, \$76,000, parsonage, \$8,000, both free of debt. Indeed a creditable report!

The year 1935 brings the story of the first one hundred years to an end. In the early months thereof a Junior Choir was organized. Sixteen girls compose this new group of singers. Clad in black and white vestments they march in processional and recessional, and they have sung several anthems with great credit to themselves. Mrs. Louis H. Miller was engaged as the director of both senior and junior choirs, the former receiving additional members in recent months. Attendance at Lenten services and Holy Communion was the highest in years and gave evidence of a spiritual quickening in human hearts still laboring under the burdens of economic distress, but clinging to God with an unshakable faith. The Endowment Fund received further increases through the gifts of Frank L. Scharff of Syracuse (\$1,000) and of the William H. Reamon family.

The constituency of the congregation is no longer confined to persons with German antecedents, though, of-course, these are still in the majority. Today there are Swiss, Scotch, Russian, Czecho-Slovakian, Swedish, and Dutch members as well

as distinctly American adherents. Concord and harmony reign among them, and the future is bright with promise. The present pastorate is the longest in the history of the congregation and will reach its eighth milestone on November 1st. Both Pastor and Mrs. Veasler enjoy the love and esteem of their fellow-Christians with whom they have shared sorrow and joy over so long a period. The faithful sexton, Louis Frosch, has for a number of years kept the church property neat and clean.

Initial plans for the observance of the 100th anniversary were shaped in the fall of last year. The Centennial Committee consists of the pastor as chairman, all members of the Church Council, the presidents of the six societies, and the organist.



Miss Laura Starbaser  
Organist since 1885

The date of the celebration has been set for October 6th to 15th, 1935. Plans for its worthy observance are going forward. In June the firm of C. W. Dabelstein and Son of Utica redecorated the church auditorium, choir loft, and lobby. The pews were given a new finish and the lighting system was improved. The Junior League is planning to present an electric clock for the church kitchen, and the S. S. S. class of confirmed girls will donate a bronze light for the pulpit as Centennial gifts. An illustrated history of the congregation will be published, the chronicle of events being the "labor of love" of the pastor. A special fund will be gathered among the members and former catechumens. The program for the celebration includes four festival



services, a reception to the former pastors, a pilgrimage to the grave of Rev. Eisenlord, the Founder, and the convention of Eastern Conference Women's Missionary Societies as the "grand finale" of the festivities.

We call this a history of the congregation, but we realize how little the story actually tells us. No doubt, the narration becomes rather dull and monotonous at times. Visible, material facts have been recorded, the most important and interesting. There are others, of-course, over which we understandingly lay the cloak of charity. History was often made by organizations, and their story is recorded in another article. The church records preserve the account of external facts. The progress of spiritual growth and attainment in human souls is eternal and invisible. The evidence of this living faith is seen in many of the deeds and accomplishments of these hundred years. As such fruitage we must regard the things that make up this history. Faith is ever active in good works and in revealing love and good will toward all men. If it is hindered or challenged in its efforts to spread the Kingdom of Christ it patiently suffers and waits a more opportune time for advancement. The state of the nation often determines the state of the church. When one prospers, the other does also. When the country experiences depressions and panics the church's finances also suffer. There were disastrous panics in 1837, 1857, 1873, 1884, 1893, 1901, 1907, and the worst of all in 1929, yet the church weathered them all. There were booms and slumps in the field of religion, yet the church survived them all. To the native honesty, thrift, industry, conservatism, and thoroughness of these Lutherans were added the fruits of the Spirit, a combination that spelled success for the church, as well as for the community. St. John's was bound to succeed!



The Church of Today

May the long history of this venerable church convince those of the younger generation who read these lines, that there must be something worthwhile in an institution that can grow to be a hundred years old. May it inspire them to love it, to pray for it, to labor for it, that their children and coming generations may also enjoy the blessings which only the Church of Christ can bestow.

The vitality and the timelessness of true religion give to its survival values. As the waters of the Mohawk River, on whose banks the congregation's three churches have stood, flows swiftly and ceaselessly to the sea, so the flight of Time has passed by them, bringing vast changes in customs, morals, beliefs, loyalties, inventions, and discoveries, yet St. John's stands unshaken upon the unchanging and unchangeable foundations of God's Eternal Word. Rejoicing in its century of tried but triumphant faith, grateful to the Almighty Head of the Church for His providential guidance, hopeful for the future, it prays with the poet:

Change and decay in all around I see;  
O, Thou Who changest not, abide with me.

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## ORGANIZATIONS

### THE CHURCH COUNCIL

That the auxiliary organizations of a congregation are vital factors in its life and growth is a fact which can not be denied. First and foremost importance must be given to the men whom the members elect to guide and to govern its temporal and material affairs. St. John's Church counts itself fortunate in having had able, wise, and devoted men on its board of trustees throughout this first century of its history. If sometimes they exercised poor judgment or revealed their inexperience in the proper management of a church, it was oftener an error of the head than of the heart. All in all, they were men of undoubted honesty and integrity, applying sound business principles, Christian charity and generosity, and native conservatism in their administration of the church's business.

The present Church Council consists of the following men, many of whom have served their church faithfully and unselfishly for years: President, William J. Rorer; Secretary, George H. Shineman; Financial Secretary, Henry C. Groff; Treasurer, C. Paul Shaper; Elders, Edward H. Hadeler, John Hambricht; Trustees, John C. Riemenschneider, Ferdinand E. Hillger, Carl Mahr; Deacons, Edward W. Shineman, Charles J. Fredericks, Floyd Houghtaling. John Klinkhart (aged 92) is an honorary member of the Board. The Finance Committee which audits the accounts is composed of Christina Carwell, Joseph Singer, and Elizabeth Reamon.

### THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Nine years after the organization of the church a school of religion was established for its youth. On August 4, 1844 a parish school was voted to be formed the instruction to be given in German at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The first teachers were Ludwig Hundertmark and Carl Ebeling of the Church Council, and August Miller and Franz Ohle of the congregation. Carl Ebeling was also the first superintendent. As the school grew in membership the faculty was increased. On April 3, 1853 the first teachers' association came into being. Its fifteen members were Henry Schrader, Edward Mueller, Christian Schläper, Frederick Riemenschneider, Carl Großman, George Klinkhart, Carl Schrader, August Treiber, Orlando Steingraber, William Ebeling, Mrs. Kirschner, Mrs. Ebeling, Mrs. Kimmerer, Anna Haeger, and Theresa Klinkhart. For some years a German school was conducted on Saturdays. A Pastor's Bible Class was organized in 1904. In January 1912 a new Constitution was adopted. Henceforth the "Sunday School Teachers' Association" was to guide the destinies of the school. The hour of instruction had been changed meanwhile to 12 o'clock noon. Since then only the English language has been used. Successors of Carl Ebeling, the first superintendent, have been Lewis Brown, Amos Klinkhart, John Hartmann, and Fred Waner. The present superintendent is George H. Shineman, and he has for the past twenty-five years most acceptably administered the affairs of the school. The Pastor is the presiding officer of the teachers' association, and he and Mr. Shineman are ably assisted on the faculty by the following teachers: Joseph Singer, Mrs. Elizabeth Rues, Mrs. Edwin Davies, Mrs. George Shineman, Elizabeth Reamon, Mrs. Herman Vesper, and Charlotte Kirsch. Substitute teachers are Mrs. Arthur Mullins, Mrs. Julius Fredericks, Mrs. Albert Barschied, and Charlotte and Emma Rubert. Mrs. Marshall Davis and Laura Bierbauer are the pianists. The school co-operates in conducting a Daily Vacation



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Shaper; corresponding secretary, Elizabeth Raemon; financial secretary, Florence D. Shanesman; treasurer, Christina Carswell. The date of the meeting is the first Tuesday of each month. There are ninety members.

### THE WILLING WORKERS

In 1911 a number of young women organized a society whose object should be the promotion of good fellowship and the doing of good deeds. Wherever Christian charity might alleviate the needy of the congregation and spread cheer and comfort to the sick and sorrowing, there the Willing Workers found their field of usefulness. Besides rendering a phase of inner mission work, this group provides flowers for the altar and distributes them later to the sick and shut-ins, remunerates the Junior Choir, presents plays, and aids the church treasury by occasional contributions. In many ways it has justified its name and its existence, and its growth and importance are increasing every year. The society meets on the last Thursday of each month. A dinner is served in the church basement by a committee of members, after which the business session is held. The officers for the present year are: President, Mrs. Sidney Dopp; vice-president, Christina Carswell; secretary, Mrs. Edwin Davies; treasurer, Louise Groff. The membership is seventy.

### THE MEN'S SOCIETY

The man power of the church, when organized, becomes one of its most valuable assets. Not all the men can serve on the Church Council, but in an organization linked definitely to the church, various talents and abilities may be applied. As far back as 1876 a "Maennerchor", or singing society, was sponsored by the Council under the condition that they "sing churchly songs and use no tobacco in the basement". Prof. Anton Kirschner was its director. Agitation for a society of men may be traced farther back than the organization of the present club, but the actual formation of an association exclusively for men and young men dates back to 1911. In 1914 there were 45 members. Their number has increased in a steady way, so that at one time more than 100 men were on its rolls. The society has been helpful in carrying on the annual Every-Member Canvass and such campaigns as the Ministerial Pension Fund. It has sponsored various projects that have resulted in financial gain to the church, fostered brotherhood among outside groups of men, and promoted sociability in its own ranks by serving a supper at each meeting, engaging interesting speakers, and playing dart ball and other games. Officers at present are: President, Carl Mahr; vice-president, Henry C. Groff; secretary, C. Paul Shaper; treasurer, Joseph Singer. The society has 74 members and meets on the third Monday of each month.

### THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Interest in home and foreign missions may be traced to the earliest years. We can understand, however, that the tasks of organizing a congregation and acquiring property for worship left little room for the support of missions or the formation of missionary societies. While every pastor, no doubt, stressed the need of spreading the Kingdom, it was Rev. Valentine Mueller (1856-1862) who first aroused real interest in the cause of missions. Himself a Moravian, and hence a zealous missionary, he preached at Bleecker and Fort Plain and gathered many Germans into his local flock. Rev. David Haeger (1862-1866) held the first mission festival on June 25, 1863 and won new friends for Gospel work among the heathen. It is probable that contributions for missions and the reading of the literature were the limits of missionary activity for many years. In 1926, however, a Women's Missionary



Society was organized by Mrs. Reinhold Stolz, the pastor's wife. She became its first president, and its first secretary and treasurer were Mrs. Marshall Davis and Mrs. George Shineman. The association affiliated itself with the Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church and became active in the smaller units of the Synod and Conference. The home and foreign mission fields under the special supervision of this great group also enjoy the study and support of this society. Its members meet on the second Thursday afternoon of each month at the home of a member, conduct a business meeting, study the magazine "Women's Work", and collect an offering out of which dues are paid. The annual Thank Offering service is sponsored, and there is co-operation in conducting the "World Day of Prayer" service with the societies of other churches. The conference society of the old Albany Conference was organized in this church, and in this centennial year the ladies have invited the Eastern Conference missionary societies to hold their annual convention here on October 15th. This small but important group has bestowed fifteen Life Memberships and six Memorial Memberships. It has fifteen active members. After Mrs. Stolz left in 1927, Mrs. Erwin L. Grant served as its beloved and capable president. When she moved from the village in September 1929, Mrs. H. Vesper assumed the presidency. Mrs. Stolz and Mrs. Grant later received life membership certificates and pins. The officers are: President, Mrs. Herman Vesper; vice-president and magazine secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Ross; treasurer, Mrs. George Shineman; secretary, Mrs. Fred Hammermith.

#### THE JUNIOR LEAGUE

There have been young people's societies and junior leagues in days gone by, but they did not enjoy a continuous existence. The Luther League attracted some of the church's youth, but the newly-confirmed need an association of their own. In 1903 a Junior League was organized. Two years later this group numbered forty-three members, yet its life was comparatively short. A further effort to consolidate the younger generation was made in April 1928. Members of the confirmation classes of the years 1918-1928 came together to elect officers and draw up a Constitution. For two years this society prospered. In April 1930 this association was merged with the new community league of young people known as the "Followers of the Glens". But this federation, whose guiding spirit was a retired Methodist missionary, Ruth White, disbanded after a few years, making it necessary for each church to form new organizations. At St. John's the class of 1934 became the nucleus of a new society which chose the name of Junior League. Doris Hambrecht was the first president and there were twelve members. Business and social meetings are held each month on the first Thursday evening. Present officers are: President, Wilbur Frank; vice-president, Joan Secoka; secretary, Doris Hambrecht; treasurer, Marion Mahr; chaplain, Marion Hagabome. The society has sixteen members.

#### THE USHERS' ASSOCIATION

For the purpose of interesting the young men in the worship services of the church an ushers' association was formed in May 1935. Its duties are to take up the Sunday collections, show worshipers to their pews, and to assist at the administration of Holy Communion. The ushers work in harmony with the deacons in the interest of order and courtesy at services. Its first president was C. Paul Shaper, and his assistants numbered twenty-seven. The present head usher is Valentine C. Warner, Jr. and the membership is about the same. The young men are serving very acceptably, their response having been most gratifying.



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## THE SENIOR AND JUNIOR CHOIRS

As the musical accompaniment at church services was first supplied by a tuning fork and base violin, then by a melodeon, then by a pipe organ whose bellows were pumped by a boy, then by the modern, electrically driven, pipe organ, so the choir accompaniment has undergone an evolution from small beginnings. Volunteer organists played the small reed organ, or melodeon, of the first church. When, in March 1864 the first pipe organ was installed, Mrs. Joseph Roser was engaged as the first regular organist. This instrument was sold to us by St. Mark's Church for \$75, Mr. Charles Ilse buying the melodeon for \$50. The liturgy of the service was learned, as well as new hymns. Prof. Anton Kirschner directed a school for singers in 1876. Anna Ilse (now Mrs. E. C. Fox) was organist in the 1880's, receiving \$40 a year for her services.

In October 1885 Miss Laura Bierbauer accepted the position as organist, and with unusual devotion, faithfulness, and self-sacrifice she has continued to play until now, a period of fifty years. Her golden jubilee occurs during the centennial celebration, when the congregation will delight to pay her a fitting tribute for her long service.

Capable male and female voices have been heard in the choir for many years, and beside the frequent singing of anthems, the choir has given cantatas and oratorios. A number of efficiently trained directors have led the choir from time to time. Mr. Joseph Roser served in this capacity for years. Amalia Zieg (now Mrs. Cooper) directed for several seasons, as did Fred G. Waner. Later Mrs. Mabel Sroughton, director of music in the public schools, was engaged. She was in charge of the senior choir from 1915 until 1924 at a salary of \$100 a year. She was followed by Mrs. Mabel Meckler who served from 1924 until 1927. Mr. Sidney Dopp assumed charge until his death in 1930. In March 1935 Mrs. Louis H. Miller entered upon a contract as directress of both the Senior and Junior Choirs, the latter having been organized in January. The Junior Choir is the second organization of this kind. Rev. Stolz gathered the first group of youthful voices, both boys and girls singing in cassock, surplice, and cap. This choir disbanded later, but in December 1934 Rev. Vesper trained a group of girls to sing Christmas carols. With these singers as a nucleus he revived a choir of children. Sixteen girls compose this present association. They receive a small reimbursement for their services from the Willing Workers. The gowns and caps of the former choir are worn, and they march in a processional and recessional with the pastor every Sunday morning. Several anthems have been sung very well by these girls, and their sweet voices add considerably to the beauty of the service. The Junior Choir has the following members: Joan Seroka (president and recording secretary); Irma Sitterly (in charge of wardrobe); Doris Hambrecht, Barbara Fredericks, Mary Vogel, Bertelle Frosch, Mary Frank, Betty Knelleken, Melissa Hagarbome, Florence Russ, Betty Tamsett, Mary Conrad, Emily Wagner, Mary Seroka, June Shael, and Margaret Hillger.

Those who sing in the Senior Choir are: Mrs. Louis H. Miller, Mrs. John Conrad, Mrs. Stanley Garlock, Charlotte Rubert, sopranos; Mrs. William J. Roser, Mrs. Mary Shaver, Mabel Smith, altos; Elmer A. Shinneman, Myron Grimshaw, tenors; William J. Roser, bass.