

HISTORICAL PAGEANT, " The Flight of a Century"

Part I. (Congregation assembles. Organ softly plays "The Little Brown Church")

As early as 1848, Whitestown was a hamlet of about a dozen log cabins. Deer and other wild animals still roamed the rugged terrain. Gradually settlers were arriving from Tennessee, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The first man who came to this place was Lemuel White, after whom the town was later named.

As the settlers came, a little band of Lutherans began worshipping in a small log cabin located not far from the present church site. It is known that this tiny group first met about 1834 to sing and pray together.

Among the first members of the congregation were many ancestors of present members: Christopher Bowers, Jacob Harmon, Ambrose Neese, George Lucas, John Uttinger, John Neese, Joseph Beelar, Solomon Buck, Jacob Ditzenberger, John Hull, Daniel Buck, their wives, and a Miss Elrod. As the number of the group increased and the need was felt for a larger place in which to worship, they moved to a spot one and one-half miles east and one mile north of the village which was later to become Whitestown. There they met in the woods on a large hill.

Soon after this change of meeting place death came to one of their number named Daniel Buck, who was buried on the same hill where they were worshipping. The date, as shown on the tombstone which is still standing in the Lutheran Cemetery, was 1835.

(Man with lantern goes to tombstone and lights it up)

To accommodate the worshippers the men built a log cabin which served as the first church building on this site. The little cabin was soon replaced by a larger building, 15' by 24'. To this church the settlers came on foot, in wagons, or on horseback to hear God's word and to have their children catechised. The Rev. E. S. Henkel, an early Lutheran Circuit Rider, was responsible for forming the tiny congregation.

(Enter traveling paster)

Enters Clyde H. Jr.

Each visit of Pastor Henkel was a red-letter day for the congregation. On these occasions the entire day was devoted to church services and administering of the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism. Often it was late evening before the day's program was completed.

In 1835 the Rev. Ezra Keller visited the new congregation. He was sent to this region as a missionary explorer by the Missionary Society of the Pennsylvania Ministerium (the first Lutheran Synod in America). In reporting his travels to the synod he wrote, "I went to Boone County, where I found a number of Lutherans from East Tennessee, settled about six miles south-east from Lebanon. These people have been visited occasionally by the Rev. E. S. Henkel of the Indiana Synod, who speaks of taking up his residence among them. I Preached to them in a cabin."

(Choir sings "The Little Brown Church in the Wildwood")

*1 stanza
Cong leaves - Remore Tomlstone, trees*

Part II. (Introduction)

By 1842 the members again felt the need of a larger

meeting place more centrally located in their community.

At this time an offer was received from a few Campbellites (forerunners of the present Christian denomination) to unite with them in forming a Union Church in the village. Since this seemed to fulfill mutual wants, they accepted the offer and the new edifice was called the Newtown Church. *Hachley Bay put up sign* It was a frame structure erected on the south side of the street, a short distance east of the main road intersection in the present Whitestown. Rev. Henkel baptized one of St. Mark's present members, Mrs. Sarah Goodwin, nee Laughner in the Newtown Church. She was the first infant to be baptized there.

(Organ softly plays "Take My Life and Let It Be")

A number of traveling ministers supplied the church for many years. And the Indiana Synod met there in 1859 with nine clergymen and several laymen in attendance. But 1866 was a banner year in the life of the congregation. In that year a minister came to Whitestown to become the first full time pastor of the Lutheran Church. At this time in Indiana history few churches had regular pastors for there were few to be had anywhere.

The incident of Pastor Miles J. Stirewalt's arrival is particularly interesting. *Antias Cecil B - Otto Hine* The story is told that Pastor Stirewalt came to Whitestown after traveling on horseback for numerous days. His appearance was most unusual from his tedious journey. Road dust covered him from head to foot and his hair and beard were quite lengthy. He announced to Wm. J. Laughner that he was to preach that Sunday at the Lutheran Church.

(Enter dust-covered Pastor Stirewalt followed by Grandfather Laughner)

Grandfather Laughner took one look at him and said, "If you're to be the preacher, you'll have to be cleaned and dressed for it." Then Mr. Laughner supplanted words with action. He grabbed a bucket and scrub brush, some home-made soap and water, a pair of scissors and a comb and proceeded to transfer the weary, soiled traveler into a polished-looking gentleman. A new suit from Mr. Laughner's store completed the transformation. Pastor Stirewalt not only spoke but also looked like a dignified preacher the following Sunday. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" so they say.

(Choir sings "Take My Life and Let it Be" CSB 382 Stanzas 1,2,3.)

Cong enters

Scene 2. (Two congregations file into church and sit facing each other on opposite benches. Organ softly plays "The Church's One Foundation")

A few years after Pastor Stirewalt came, the union Newtown Church faced difficulties. The Campbellites insisted upon adult baptism while the Lutherans believed in the infant baptism. When the tension rose between the groups, the Lutherans decided to build their own church, not wanting to sacrifice their rich Lutheran heritage by remaining in the union church.

(Choir sings "The Church's One Foundation" stanza 1. Congregation gets seated for meeting during singing.)

Scene 3. *Place small table - Sec Book - quilt*

Under Pastor Stirewalt the size of the membership soon outgrew the Newtown Church building. This fact and the old building's need of repair necessitated a congregational meeting to bring about a remedy for the situation. Such a meeting was called on a night in April of 1868. Written records of the

church were first begun on this night. Joseph Etter, the secretary, recorded the proceedings of the meeting. In a subsequent meeting the church became a legal organization and the name was changed from "Newtown Church to "St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church" and a new church building was planned and built. Forty-one charter members signed the church constitution at this time.

Put up sign

Cong leaves during Song by choir

(Sign "Newtown Church" replaced by "St. Mark's sign)
 (Choir sings "The Church's One Foundation", stanza 2. Congregation files off during singing. Scenery changed for committee meeting.)

Part III. (Introduction)

Place large table - 9 chairs - Blue Print

Several years later as the building settled, the walls spread into a dangerous position. It became necessary to rebuild the roof and walls of the new church. However, the repaired structure served as the house of worship for the congregation for thirty-three years.

No unusual events were recorded during that period; however, we do know that the congregation, un the leadership of seven different pastors, steadily grew and the church continued to be an active force in the community. The Sunday School was begun sometime during these years. However, the exact date is not known.

*Enter - R. C. L. - E. B. L. - Ora. O. - Deb
 Will W. - Duke B. Minnie C.*

(Scene 1. Organ softly plays. Men gather around table.)

The passing years again found St. Mark's Church in need of repair and remodeling. In 1903 the congregation, under Pastor D. L. Reese, took action to build a new church instead of remodeling the old one because the reported cost of remodeling was almost as much as that of building a new structure. The new church was to be made of brick, trimmed in stone, and to cost about \$7,000. The present church is the outcome of these

plans.

The men responsible for the building and finances were: Charles B. Laughner, Andrew G. Laughner, O. S. Taylor, W. H. Witt, R. O. Laughner, Ora Uttinger, and Pastor Reese.

Four members of this committee are still living: W. H. Witt, R. O. Laughner, Charles B. Laughner, and Ora Uttinger.

(Choir sings "Give to Our God Immortal Praise" 307 Stanzas 1, 2, Scenery changed. Men gather around cornerstone.)

*Remove table chairs
Place
Corner S. etc.*

Scene 2 (Organ softly plays same hymn. Congregation gathers around cornerstone.)

*Cong
enters*

While the new church building was under construction, regular church and Sunday School services were held in the school house. At this time the Sunday School took on new life and increased considerably in size. In the spring of 1904 the old church was torn down, and excavation of the basement was begun. The foundation was completed in May. In June the corner stone was laid at special services conducted by the ~~pastor~~ pastor and the Rev. A. H. Arbaugh of Frankfort.

The dedication service was held on January 29, 1905.

Participating in the three services for the day were Pastors Hiram Peters, President of Synod, A. H. Arbaugh, W. J. Seiberling, and D. L. Reese. The choir of the Frankfort Church provided the music for the first service. A Children's service was conducted at 3 P.M. under the direction of J. T. Frank Laughner, Superintendent of the Sunday School.

Cong leaves

The church ~~which~~ which now serves the congregation was quite a contrast to the previous building. Its advantages consisted of a main auditorium with a seating capacity of approximately 400 and a basement containing a dining room, kitchen, and furnace room. The church was

equipped with a up-to-date gasoline lighting system. The bell, organ, and some of the seats were placed in the new building from the former church. The demensions were 48' by 70'.

Improvements have been made in the present church since it was built. In 1913 hardwood floors were laid in the church proper. Subsequently electric lights took the place of the gasoline lamps. And in 1946 a blower-type furnace was installed.

An extensive decoration program was carried out early in 1948. The floors and pews were refinished, new carpeting was laid, and the entire interior was repainted. And then the dream of a new Baldwin electronic organ became a reality. A display sign was acquired and placed in front of the church. Through the year the alter has been fully equipped because of the generous ~~XII~~ gifts of many.

In 1919 a house located on the north side of town was purchased and used as the parsonage. There being no town fire fighting equipment, it burned in a three house blaze in 1925. The present parsonage was built on the same foundation.

And so we conclude our historical sketch of one hundred years of St. Mark's Lutheran Church. But we must remember that the church is the expression of the moral and religious life of a community. As we pause to review the inspiration of the loyalties and devotions in the past, let us look to the challenges of the future with the same faith and courage as the pioneer men and women who began our congregation. Having reached the century mark, we must not stand still. There are

many frontiers before us. Men and women of God are needed now more than ever before. Let us carry on in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Congregation sings "Now Thank We All Our God" 283 all stanzas. Actors file off stage to seats.)