

THE HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S, AHNAPEE:
IT'S BEGINNING TO AT'S JOINING SYNOD

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

Mark Toepel
Church History

Around the year 1850 the first settlers came to the area around Ahnapee. They were mostly either of English, German, or Scandinavian background. Those people who were of German blood were closely united because of their Christian faith. For several years the few and scattered German settlers of the Lutheran faith met together at their respective houses to worship jointly, and to strengthen and encourage one another those first hard and very trying years.

In 1856 the Northwestern Conference started Church extension work on a larger scale. It was mostly carried on by a Pastor Fachtman who was called to be a special missionary. It was partly because of his findings that Pastor Bading and Pastor Koehler undertook a hiking expedition from West Bend to Ahnapee on Lake Michigan. They passed through the Calumet countryside and at a road crossing met four Latin farmers. The four men had come from Germany where they had each held a high professional rank. One was a university teacher from Kiel, another a gymnasium teacher, the third a jurist, and the fourth a former councillor of jurisprudence. They were now Forty-Eighters who had settled with their families to make a home in the wilderness. Although they were not Church goers, they welcomed the travelling preachers with the hospitality which was common for the day. Because of their isolation they were especially happy to see fellow Germans passing their way.

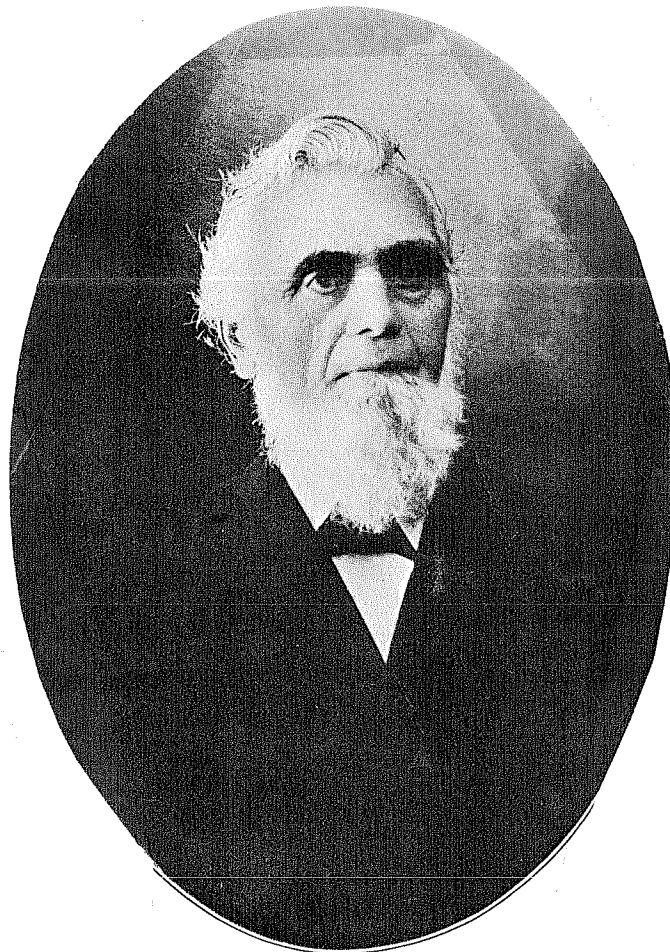
When the Pastors left after a few days rest, the families furnished an ox cart to the Pastors to ease the burden

of their journey. The Pastors however found it more comfortable walking than riding in the ox cart so they sent it back. They went on to Manitowoc where Goldammer was stationed and then on to Two Rivers, Kewaunee, and finally Ahnapee. The result of their trip was the extension of Goldammer's work north of Two Rivers. About the same time a Pastor Stecker, a Missourian from Sheboygan, was canvassing the area, making the beginnings of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods in that territory.¹

For about six years, Lutheran travelling missionaries served those of the Lutheran faith with Word and Sacrament as often as their time and wide field of service permitted them to do.

In November of 1862 Harms of Hermansburg, upon Bading's request, sent Johannes Brockman to America. After arriving in Milwaukee, he was sent to Ahnapee in hopes of starting a congregation there. By the fall of 1862 the German settlers of Lutheran faith had already grown to such large numbers that with the help of God they cheerfully and courageously decreed to organize and establish a Lutheran Congregation in thier midst. The Reverend John Brockman became the first resident pastor. He wrote this about his ministry at Ahnapee. " After I had completed my ministerial training at the Theological Seminary at Hanover, Germany, and had received my ordination papers from this body, I turned my steps toward America, the land of religious liberty, to which thousands of my fellowmen had immigrated.

Soon after my arrival at Milwaukee I met with the Rev. John Bading, then president of the newly organized Wisconsin Synod. Pastor Bading welcomed me into his church-body and instructed me to go at once to Ahnapee, Kewaunee County, and with the help of God organize a Lutheran Congregation at that place. I followed Pastor Bading's instructions, came to Ahnapee and preached my first sermon on the Second Sunday in Advent, 1862. The following Wednesday, December 10, the congregation was organized. It extended to me an official call and I became its first resident pastor."²



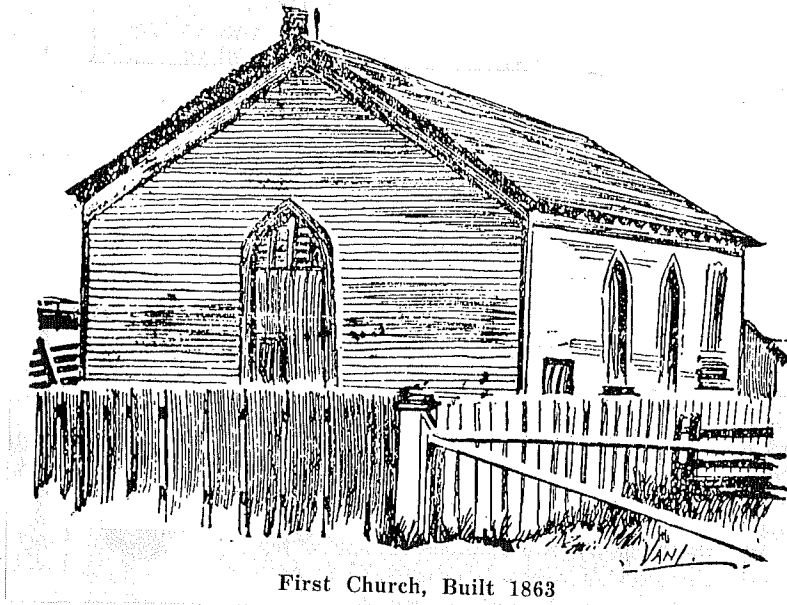
Pastor J. H. Brockmann
Organizer of the Congregation, 1862

As it was said the exact date of organization was December 10, 1862. Its brief constitution was signed by Braemer, Busch, Damas, Ebert, Gericke, Haack, Klensky, Krause, Stuebs, Schmeling, Serrahn, Toebe, Wichmann, and Zimmerman. F.W. Haack was appointed to serve as chairman, John Klensky as elrer and Adolph Wichmann as secretary and treasurer. One of the founding members, Charles Krause, was my great grandfather. Unfortunately family recollection of him is very scarce.

When Pastor Brockman came to serve St. Paul's, he actually was serving three congregations at the same time. Besides St. Paul's there was St. John's across the river, and also Immanuel which was up the river about a mile west of Forestville. Pastor Brockman preached at St. John's school-house every two weeks, and at Immanuel once every eight weeks, and at Kewaunee once every three months. On all other Sundays he preached at Ahnapee.

In 1863 only its first year after organization, the congregation bought its own parsonage. They were also in the midst of building their first church. They were building the church on the north side of the river, and they resolved that the members of St. John's should build and finance their own building project. But as long as St. John's did not have its own pastor, that the pastor of St. Paul's should live on the south side of the river but not more than five hundred feet from the river. The church was completed and

dedicated on September 27, 1863.



In the same year it was also resolved that every member of the congregation was obligated to one half cord of wood, which he was to deliver to the parsonage during the winter months. It was also resolved that every male member, having reached the age of 21 years, be requested to become a voting member, sign the constitution and contribute toward the congregation to the best of his ability.

In 1864 St. Paul's joined the Wisconsin Synod. Brockman expressed his sentiment in a letter to president Reim. He said, " May the gracious God grant that our synod gradually become such a one that not only may boast of the Lutheran name but of teaching and conduct that are really true to the confessions."³ St. Paul's Ahnapee, now Algoma, has remained a faithful member of the Wisconsin Synod from that day on.

Endnotes:

1. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod, p. 51.
2. Toepel, Jubilee Anniversary Booklet
3. Koehler, p. 99.

Bibliography:

1. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod, Sentinel Publishing Company, St. Cloud, 1970
2. Synodal Berichte, Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1862, 1864.
3. Toepel, Jubilee Anniversary Booklet, 1937.

Wandl, Hermann, Geschichte der Wisconsin Synode
1847-1864, Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1937
Wandl, Hermann, Geschichte der Wisconsin Synode
1865-1884, Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1937