

"THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF ST. PETER'S, KEKOSKEE, WISCONSIN"

Senior Church History, Sec. B

Prof. Fredrich

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The history of St. Peter's of Kekoskee is closely related to that of St. Jacobi of Town Theresa, which disbanded shortly before its centennial. St. Jacobi was organized in 1854. Although the beginning of St. Peter's congregation was small and without much show, it was nevertheless definite and defined. On the 28th of January, 1872, Pastor Jacob Conrad of St. Jacobi held the first service in Kekoskee in the public school, then located in the school park, and now serving as the Town Hall. Mathilda Rohde was baptized in this first service.

Eight weeks later, on March 29th, following the worship service a meeting was held in which the group organized the St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kekoskee. From the minutes of that meeting we find that the following resolutions were adopted:

1. That our congregation shall bear the title: Evangelical Lutheran St. Peter's Congregation of Kekoskee, Dodge County, Wisconsin.
2. That we look upon Pastor Conrad, who, upon our petition, has thus far conducted our Divine services, as our duly called pastor.
3. That we adopt the constitution for congregations authorized by the Wisconsin Synod.
4. That we petition the honorable Wisconsin Synod to accept us into its corporate body.
5. That we elect a Board of Elders and Trustees to administer the spiritual and temporal affairs of the congregation. The election held then and there resulted in the unanimous choice of the following men: Julius Stepp for one year, Fred Darge for two years, and Carl Witte for three years.
6. That a new Elder be elected each year, but that the man whose term has expired may be reelected.

That the above are actually and factually the resolutions of the Ev. Luth. St. Peter's

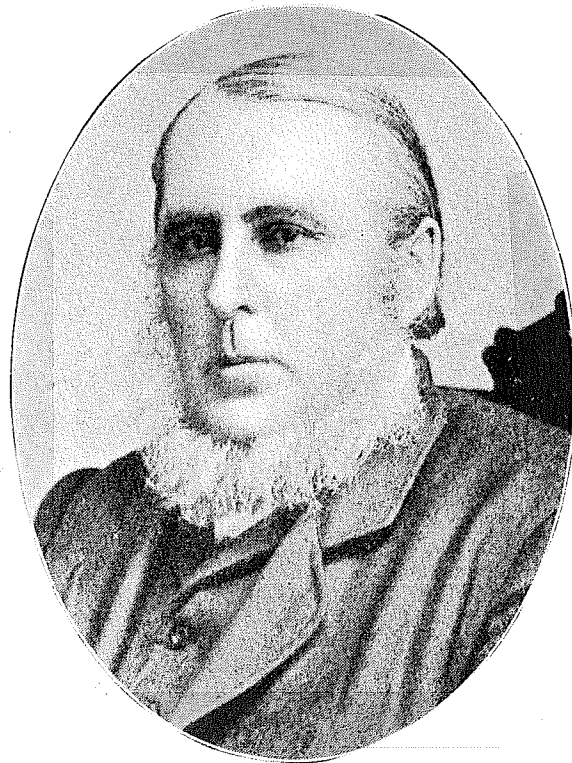
Congregation in Kekoskee, Dodge County, Wisconsin is attested to by the affixing of our names in the name of the congregation.

The Board:

Jacob Conrad, Pastor
Julius Stepp
Friedrich Darge
Carl Witte

This newly organized congregation comprised 110 souls, 58 communicants, and 24 voting members. The following men have gone down in history as the charter members of St. Peter's:

Henry Roll	Carl Rehde
Louis Wauka	Fred Helling
George Eberle	John Schuett
Christian Eberle	Carl Kasten
Fred Stange	F. Wolther
August Suekow	Fred Jaenecke
Christian Leest	William Rehde
Frank Wendt	Wm. Schwartzmiller
Carl Hartwig	Gottlieb Baer
Carl Witte	Martin Zwiag
Fred Darge	William Schultz
Julius Stepp	Frank Hemuth



On March 19th, 1877 the congregation voted to adopt Articles of Incorporation and to file them with the State. That same year a frame church with steeple was erected, and dedicated on September 8th, 1877. Pastor Kilian, Pastor Gausewitz, and Prof. Ernst were the speakers for the festive occasion. Pastor Conrad

Pastor Jacob Conrad served St. Peter's faithfully and well for fourteen years. Pastor Conrad served St. Peter's in addition to St. Jacobi. It is interesting to note that he was also the first Lutheran Pastor of St. John's, Mayville. Pastor Conrad asked to be relieved of his duties at St. Peter's because of his advanced age

and because of his work load at St. Jacobi. He recommended that Pastor Henry Rathjen be called to succeed him. Pastor Rathjen accepted the call and was installed as Pastor of St. Peter's in December of 1886. This created dissension in the congregation, for Pastor Rathjen refused to join the Wisconsin Synod. This was not conducive to the welfare of the congregation nor to the peaceful and effective work of the Pastor. Upon the departure of Pastor Rathjen in 1888 the congregation was split into two factions. The one faction was anxious to call Pastor Lessmann, also of the Missouri Synod. However, the majority of the congregation wanted to maintain its affiliation with the Wisconsin Synod, and so they asked Pastor N. Gottmanshausen of Brownsville to serve as vacancy pastor. About this same time Pastor Conrad retired, and St. Peter's once again joined with St. Jacobi as one parish. The dual parish now decided to call Pastor Gottmanshausen as their Shepherd. However, he felt constrained to decline the call. After this Pastor Otto Posselt was called, and he accepted. But his ministry at the St. Peter's and St. Jacobi parishes lasted for only seven months. Pastor Posselt, apparently left without a just reason. So once again the two congregations had to issue another call. This time they sent the call to Pastor G. W. Albrecht, but he returned it. The congregations felt very strongly that Albrecht was the Pastor for the job, so they sent the call to him a second time. But even this did not convince Pastor Albrecht to accept. Next they called Pastor Bast, and he accepted the call. However, he could not be installed, because he had in the mean time received the call from the Lord of the Church to enter the Church Triumphant. These four years from 1886-1890 were indeed trying times for both congregations. The repercussions of these four years made themselves felt for some time in the future.

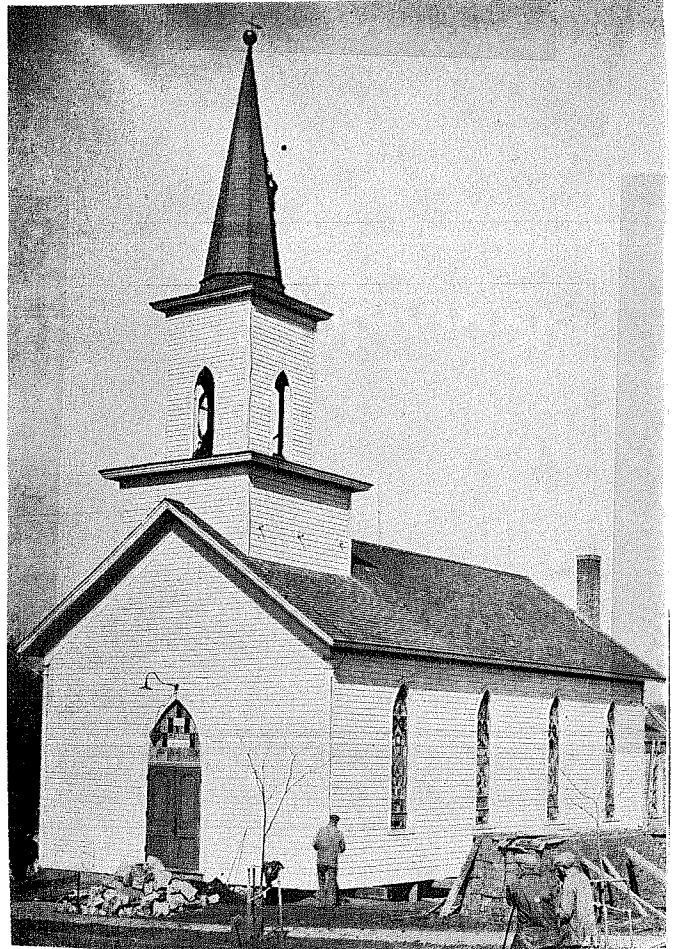
The dual parish call next came into the hands of Pastor L. B. Mielke. Pastor Mielke was ordained and installed on May 2nd, 1890. He restored peace and unity of spirit within the congregation. In 1894 Pastor Mielke accepted a call to Tess Corners, and he preached his farewell sermon on October 16. For the next four months Pastor Adolph Teepel of Town Herman served both congregations as Supply Pastor (Vacancy Pastor).

The two-congregation parish now called Pastor Rud. F. W. Pietz. On February 17, 1895 Pastor Pietz was installed by Pastor Ed. Hoyer. The new spirit of peace and quiet that had settled once more on St. Peter's showed itself also in outward things. In 1897 a new pulpit and new altar coverings were purchased together with a silver plated Communion set. On Laetare Sunday, 1900, a new 1283 pound bell was dedicated to the Lord's service. For the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the church (1902), the baptismal font, crucifix, candelabra, hymnboard and agenda were added to the equipment of the church. In 1902 Pastor Pietz accepted the call to the Lemira congregation. He gave his farewell sermon on November 27, 1902.

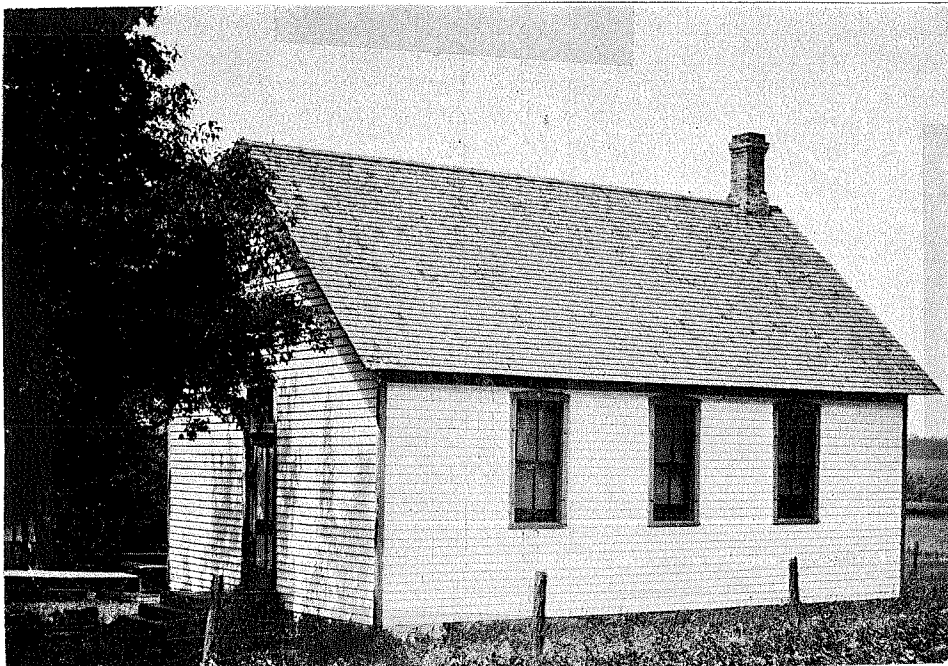
The next pastor to serve the dual parish was Pastor C. F. W. Voges. He was installed on December 7th, 1902. For the purpose of more effective work in the Summer School and with an eye toward the future possibility of a parochial school, a well located and spacious school property was acquired. A one-room school building was erected on the property just north of the church. Pastor Voges was called to Ridgeville, Wisconsin, and preached his farewell sermon on February 9th, 1913.

At this point I will just name the pastors who have served St. Peter's. They are as follows:

1913-1919 Pastor G. A. Denninger
 1919-1937 Pastor Otto Toepel
 1937-1950 Pastor R. O. Marti
 1950-1957 Pastor Norbert Mielke
 1957-1973 Pastor Melvin W. Croll
 1974- ? Pastor Thomas Knickelbein



This is a picture of the first church built in 1877. It has since been torn down and a new brick structure erected in its place in 1927. This brick church is still being used today.



This is a picture of the Summer School built in 1905. It still stands today but is no longer in use. I attended Summer School in this building.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Anniversary Booklets from St. Peter's.

The original minutes of St. Peter's and St. Jacobi.

I could find no people living who could remember the early years of St. Peter's history. The Mayville News does not go back that far either. The only place that I didn't check was St. John's in Mayville (Missouri Synod). It was served by Pastor Conrad. I wanted to look into the split during Pastor Rathjen's term more closely, but I could find nothing in the minutes nor could I find anyone who knew something about this. Either it was hushed up and not recorded or maybe they just swept it under the rug and wanted to forget about it. Perhaps, there was a third possibility, and that is that it really was no big issue to begin with.

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