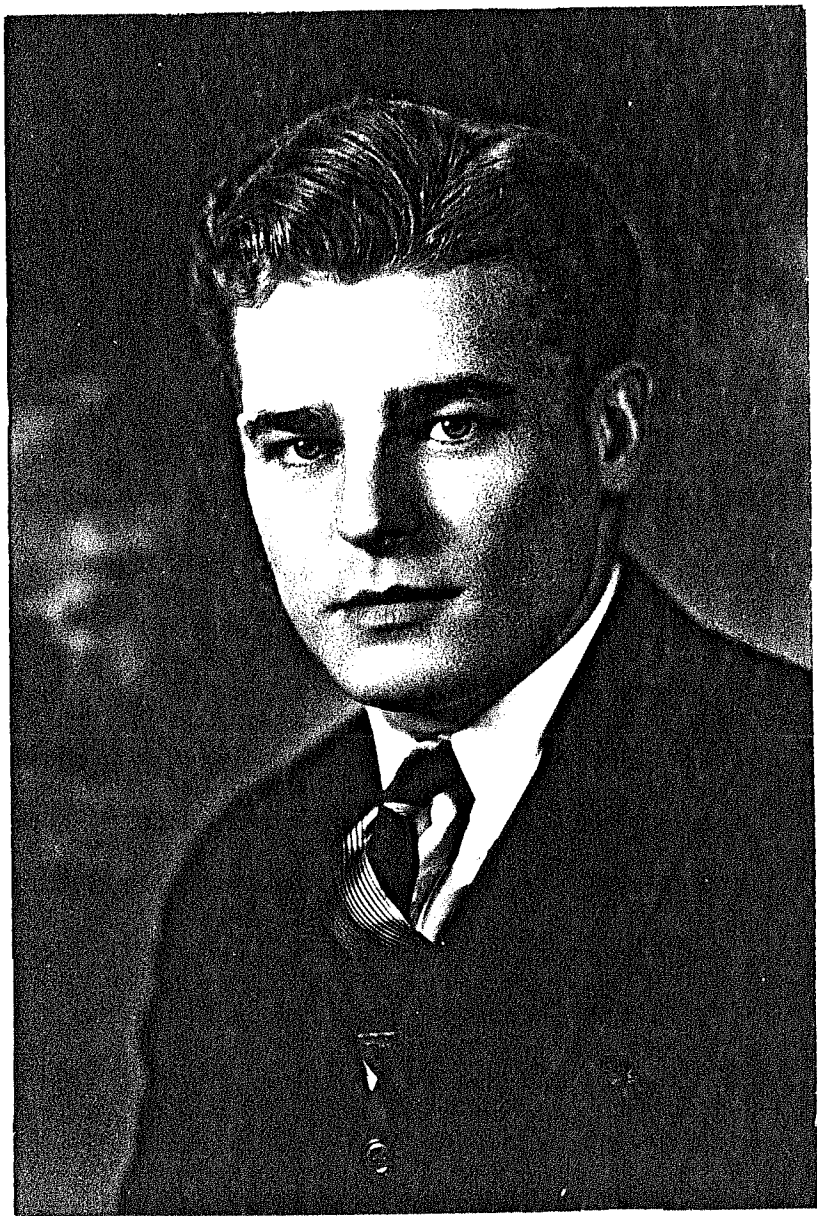


REV. JOHN MARTIN



THE BELLEVILLE YEARS

- Scott Martin -

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library

1931 N. Southwestern Drive 65W

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38,39). This confession by the Apostle Paul to the saints in Rome was one of Rev. Martin's favorite Bible passages. This love of God was made evident to Rev. Martin through the eyes of faith; faith, which was instilled in his heart by the Holy Spirit working through the Word; faith, which clung to God's promises of full and free forgiveness in Christ Jesus, our Lord. In many ways, God visibly demonstrated his love in the life and ministry of Rev. Martin. Rev. Martin was blessed with Christian parents, who daily nurtured his faith with the Word of God. Our Lord entrusted Rev. Martin with the privilege of doing full-time kingdom work - planting the seed of God's Word and the nurturing the plants with that same Word. Our Lord blessed his labors. The Lord blessed Rev. Martin with a God-fearing wife, who accepted the role in which God had placed her and who joyfully and willingly served as a help-mate to Rev. Martin in his work of the ministry. And through their marital union, our good and gracious God blessed Pastor and his wife with 2 children. Rev. Martin - sinner declared saint by God's grace through the blood of Jesus Christ. Rev. Martin knew Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior and proclaimed this precious gospel message faithfully in his ministry. Certainly nothing was able to separate Rev. Martin from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It was on Sept. 12, 1911, that the Lord blessed Maria (Schoenhals) and Rev. Philip Martin with the gift of twins, a boy and a girl. The girl was named Margaret and the boy, John Herbert. On Sept. 20, John became a child of the most high God, when he was baptized in the name of the triune

God - Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

In a questionnaire (entitled, "Finding Out About Your Family") which was prepared for his 2 grand-daughters as a 5th grade assignment, Rev. Martin answered a number of questions concerning himself at age 11. Following is a list of selected questions and his responses.

#5 - What did you do for fun?

Learned how to swim in the Elkhorn River. In later years I asked my mother how it was that she allowed us to go swimming with our gang (kids the same age), She said: "you will never know how much I prayed! - until you were safe at home!"

Playing marbles was always a big pastime; playing for "keeps" against other kids from other schools was the high point.

Owning a Benjamin air rifle was a prized possession - shooting pigeons off the church steeple was fun, until ---

Games: "Run, my good sheep run" = "Pump, pump pull away" (This is what we called these fun games. "Crack the whip" - "Shinny" Our modern Hockey; the putt was a tin can - we made our own hockey sticks (clubs) by cutting down willow trees (diameter of broom handle) and then putting them into a fire for a time; then wiring them into position like a hockey club (overnite or another whole day and they would stay as they were bent!)

For fun too: my older brothers taught me how to skin a civit cat or a rabbit, mount the hide on a board, let it dry until fur was prime and then sell it to a fur company. Maybe 35 cents, maybe a dollar or two, depending on condition. Felt real proud to do something like that. (together with playmates)

"Andy-over" game we often played, rubber ball thrown over the school house - school frame, 2 story, not too tall - when someone caught ball that person would come running around the school and whomever the ball would hit, that person was "out".

Believe it or not: When I was 7 and brother was 11, we went hunting with shotguns, he had the "hammerless" and I had the one with a trigger. He taught me (my Father taught him) how to handle a gun.

Iceskating at Mathes's pond, year after year. The town fathers allowed streets on a high long hill to be cordoned off so not only the kids, but oldsters too, could sleigh-ride down the hill. Crowds were there. Night time was most exhilarating! What memories! Never heard of murders, robberies, rapes, and every kind of violence. How precious the memory!

#6 - What holidays were special? How did you celebrate?

Christmas: Very special - never did days go by so slowly as the time before Christmas - a week was an eternity. At our place the parlor was closed off with a bedsheet to all (as we thought) so that the presents and the tree could be brot in. How that sized tree could be brought in without everything being torn off I never found out.

Also at Christmas time, all of us had to say our Christmas piece before the parlor was opened to us all.

At Easter time: hunting for Easter eggs was the fun part; getting dressed in our best, with the long stockings and the knickers for boys. I still remember the long white stockings - maybe that was for Easter.

At Pentecost we had a very special job: to get all the greens we could gather from the woods; we helped tie the branches to the pillars in the church. The altar was decorated with ferns. Green was for spiritual life.

Fourth of July: In those days everyone had fireworks; fire-crackers, torpedoes, devil-on-the-walk, Roman candles, sky-rockets, last but not least, sparklers (the only kind legally sold today in our area)

Halloween: We dare not forget: we would watch the parochial school building, but despite our vigilance the ropes were cut each fall and the dear bell was not heard until the rope was replaced. Other things - like tipping over the outhouses was routine.

New Year's Eve: church and then we went skating. Oyster stew at midnight. That still has not changed in our house. That was the time for ghost stories. Entertainment at a gathering was furnished by the folks who could tell the gruesomest ghost stories.

#11 - What did you like to eat?

Clabbored milk (thickened sour milk over a piece of bread, seasoned with cinnamon and sugar. Ma's homemade bread and coffee cake which I enjoyed every Saturday nite when I returned from the barber shop shining shoes.

In the fall of 1925, John enrolled in Dr. Martin Luther High School. During the summer months, he worked in the flour mills in New Ulm. 1929 was a big year for John. Not only would he graduate from Dr. Martin Luther High School, but also his father accepted a call to serve as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Brownsville, WI. It was here in Brownsville, at a St. Paul's youth group meeting, that John would meet his future wife, Irene Lillian Raasch. Mrs. Martin would say in later years about her 1st contact with John, "I instantly fell in love with him."

In the fall of 1929, John enrolled in Northwestern College in Watertown, WI, in order to continue his preparation for the ministry. During his college years, he played football and basketball. In the summers, he worked as chief cook in a Brownsville pea canning factory for 25¢ per hour.

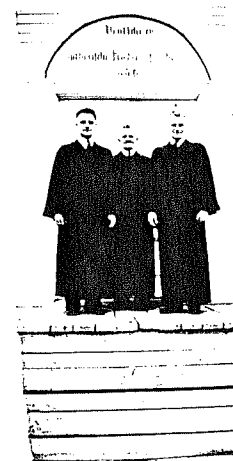
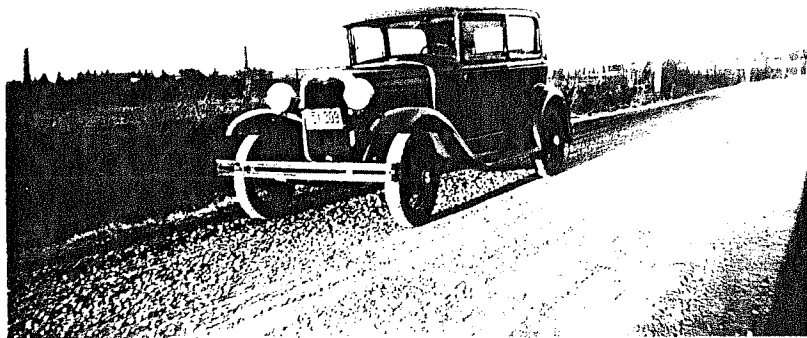
In the fall of 1933, John enrolled in Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville, WI. Classmates remember John for his beautiful singing voice. He graduated on June 10, 1937.



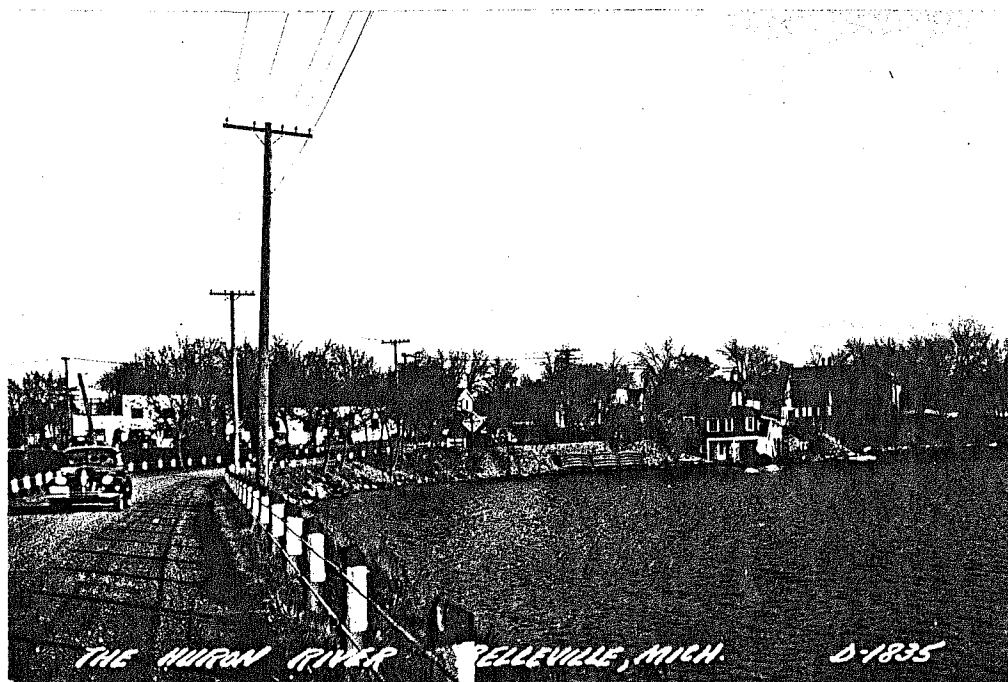
Upon graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, John accepted a call to teach grades 1-8 in a one room elementary Christian Day School in Eldorado, WI, which is near Fond du lac. Besides teaching the standard subjects, he added algebra, Latin and English for one student, who wanted to do on to study for the ministry.



His salary was \$35.00 per month plus board. Out of that, he purchased his first car, a used model A Ford for \$125.00.



In July, 1939, John Martin was ordained and installed by his father and his brother, as a interim pastor at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church in Waucousta, WI. Although he loved the teaching ministry, he was elated in the fall of 1939 to finally receive a permanent call to serve as parish pastor in a mission congregation in Belleville, MI.



Just a few short months earlier, in the summer of 1939, under the supervision of the Mission Board of the Michigan District, a canvass was conducted by the following persons: Pastors A. Wacker, H. Engel, R. Scheele, F. Weiland, and Mr. F. Hirth. The canvass report showed that there were a goodly number of families interested in establishing a Lutheran Church. A house and lot were acquired at 176 W. Columbia.



The Rev. R. Scheele, Missionary of Tecumseh was given the responsibility to get the Mission started and began preaching. The first service was held in the house on 176 W. Columbia Ave., on Sunday, October 8, 1939. There were 42 in attendance. The steady increase in attendance convinced the Mission Board that a permanent pastor was needed. On Dec. 3, 1939, at 3:00 P.M., Rev. John Martin was installed as Pastor of the English Evangelical Lutheran Church in Belleville, MI. The service began with the singing of "Open Now Thy Gates Of Beauty." The Rev. A. Wacker of Ann Arbor preached the sermon. Rev. R. Scheele officiated for the installation and was assisted by Rev. H. Engel of Saline. The service concluded with Rev. Martin giving

the Benediction and the congregation singing the doxology, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." 90 were in attendance. First pastoral acts at the house on 176 Columbia included the baptism of Margaret Jean Walters.

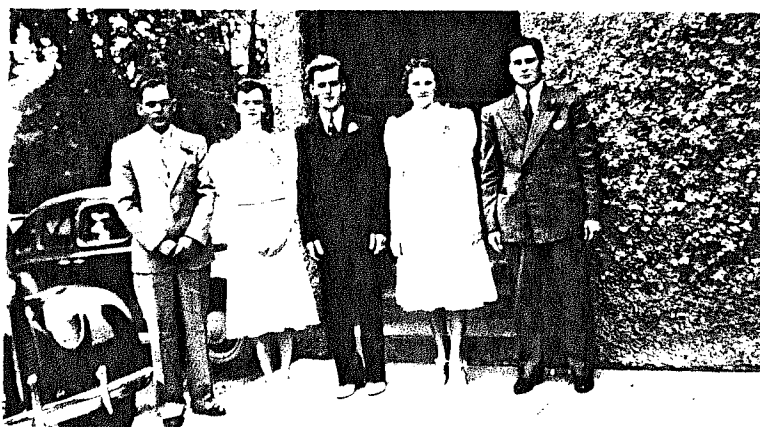
On Jan. 14, 1940, Rev. Martin married his sweet-heart of 10 years, Irene Lillian Raasch at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Brownsville. The wedding service was conducted by the groom's father, Rev. Philip Martin.



The lovely bride and handsome groom

Upon arriving back in Belleville, the Martin's rejoiced to find all the rooms of the parsonage furnished with new furniture. At that time, mission salary for a married pastor was \$86.92 for 1 month. When their son was born, his salary was raised by \$5.00.

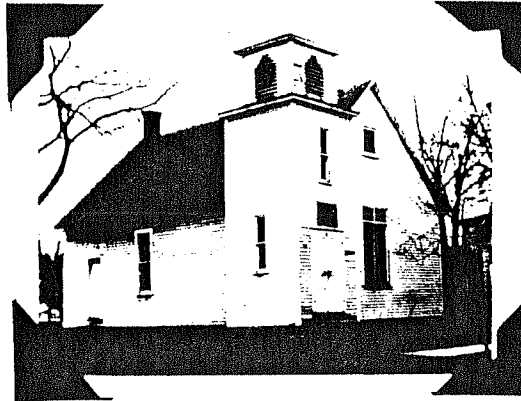
The need for a permanent place of worship was greatly desired. Since the house which served as both parsonage and church was becoming too small to accomodate the worshippers, arrangements were made with Mr. Orlo Roberts of Belleville for the use of his funeral chapel on Main St. Services were conducted here for the first time on Easter Sunday, March 24, 1940 and conducted regularly thereafter until Dec. 22, 1940. First pastoral acts included the baptisms of Mr. Russell Cooper and Mr. Robert Merrell. Lobelia Ball and Elon Gernant were the first bride and groom to be married in this worship facility. The first confirmation class:



Russell Cooper/Mrs. H. Nadeau/Robert Merrell/Mrs. Helen Bishop/Robert Schnurstein

Because of local changes, it became impossible to continue services in the funeral chapel. Another place was sought. The leaders of the Seventh Day Adventist Church placed their church at St. Paul's disposal. Services

were conducted here until Feb. 18, 1942 First pastoral acts included the baptism of Jimmie Erwin Schultz. The first confirmands were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bunyea and Jimmie Colemann. Joyce Foskett and Arthur Trent, Jr. were the first bride and groom married in this worship facility.



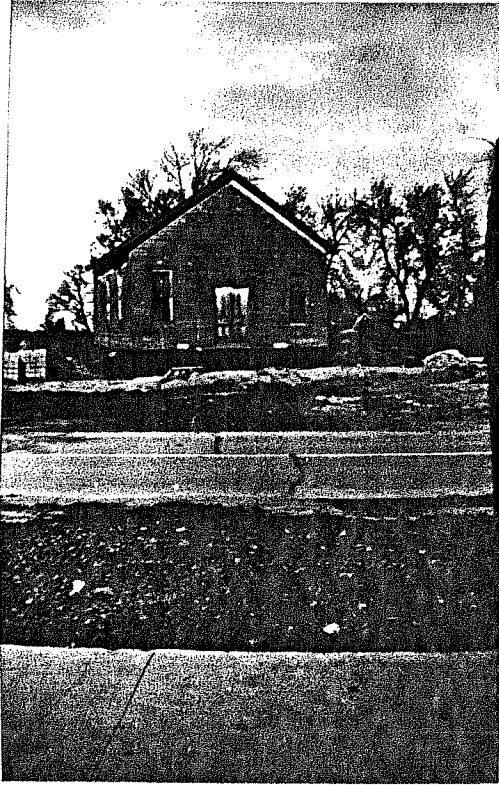
On April 7 and 14, 1940, meetings were held for the purpose of organizing as a congregation. Rev. A. Mass, a member of the Mission Board, was with the congregation, lending sound spiritual guidance. The constitution was adopted and signed by 13 voting members. On May 2, the following officers were elected: President, H. Leschinsky; Secretary, C. Jorgensen; Deacons, C. Miller, H. Mason; Trustees: N. Miller, H. Agge and H. Nadeau. Work began in earnest to find a church site. Finally after many meetings and much discussion, the congregation on Oct. 14, 1940, resolved to purchase the property at 494 Columbia for the sum of \$3000.00. Members elected to transact the business were: N. Miller, R. Cooper, H. Nadeau. With the sanction of the Mission Board, loans for purchase of the property were obtained from members of Trinity Congregation, Saline and from our members. On Feb. 10, after a month of steady work by the members, the parsonage was ready for occupancy.



In a special meeting on Dec. 16, 1940, the members decided to buy the vacant church at Willis, MI. The church building, 28 by 42, contained pews, reed organ and lecturn. The cost was \$250.00. At this time, three more members were added to the aforementioned committee. These were: L. Mida, H. Leschinsky and H. Agge. Much disappointment and delay were encountered with the moving of the building to Belleville, a distance of 9 miles. The first mover was unsuccessful. A second mover, Mr. N. Collins of Maybe, MI, succeeded in bringing the building to Belleville to 494 Columbia Ave. Additional loans of money were received from members of Trinity, Saline, of Scio Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor, and from the Synod to remodel the church. The cost of the church building project was approximately \$4000.00. The total indebtedness, lots, parsonage, church as of March 31, 1942 was \$5911.85.

On April 26, 1942, church membership had grown from 13 voting members, 35 communicant members in May 1940 to 23 voting and 65 communicant members.

Thirty-six children were enrolled in St. Paul's Sunday School. The Ladies' Aid was organized in Feb. of 1940. Ministrations: 21 were baptized, of these three were adults. Fifteen had been confirmed, of these 8 were adults.

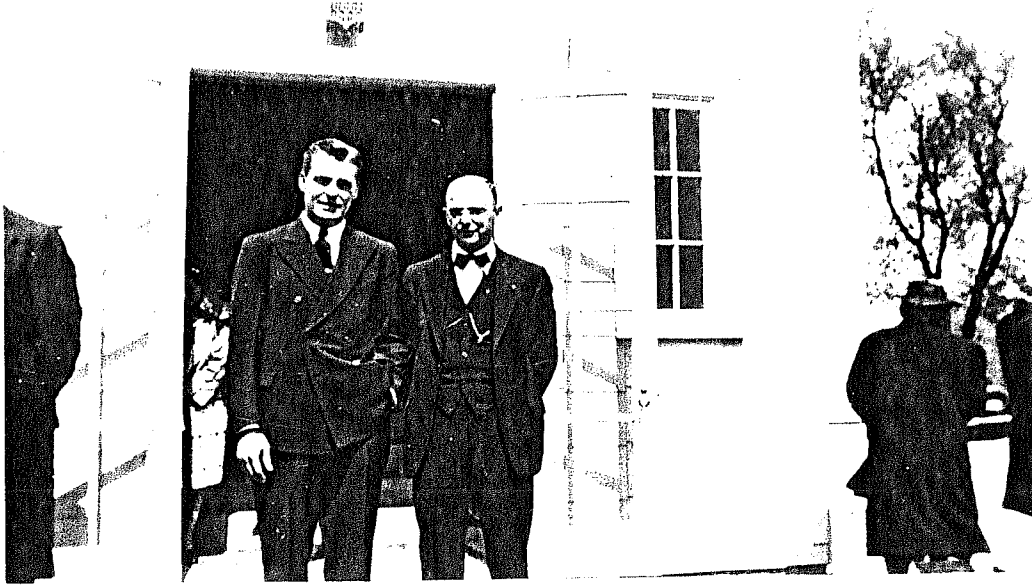


The moving of the vacant church from Willis, MI., down Huron River Dr. to 494 Columbia.

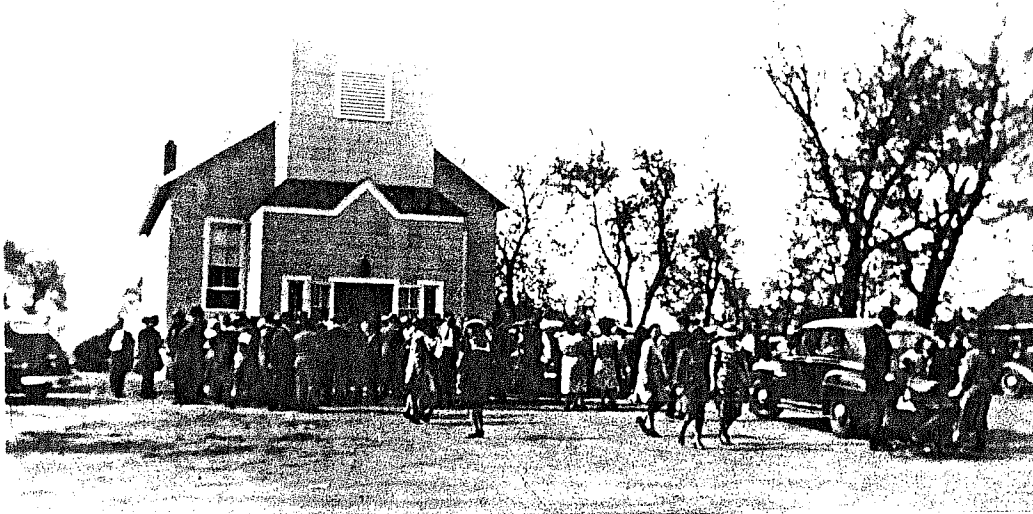


Policeman - Harry Agge

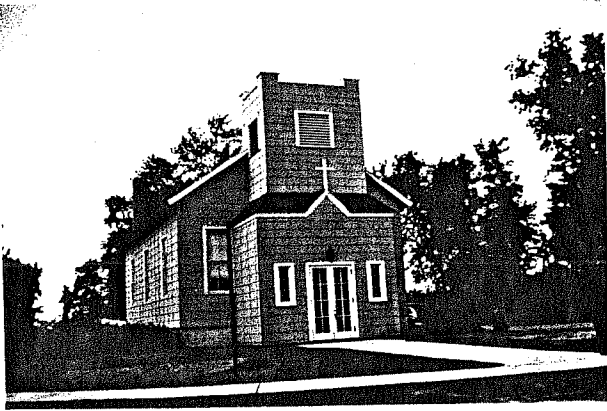
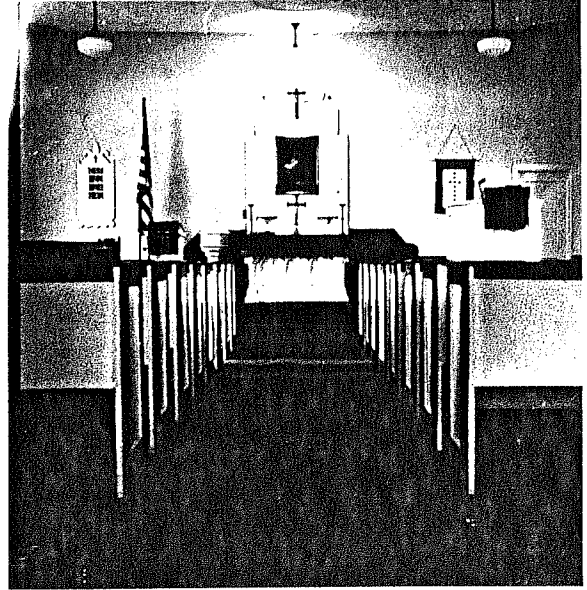
On Apr. 26, 1942, St. Paul's dedicated it's new worship facility. Rev. A Wacker from Ann Arbor preached at the 10:30 service; Rev H. Engel from Saline at the 3:00 service and Rev. K. Vertz from Detroit at the 8:00 service. Mrs. W. Birk, accompanied by Miss Mildred Mason, sang "The Lord's My Shepherd" and "In Thy Hands." Charlotte Mason, also accompanied by Mildred Mason, sang "My Faith Looks Up to Thee." At the evening service, Mrs. W. Birk sang "Be Still My Soul." On this day over 500 men, women and children gathered together to give thanks and praise to the Triune God.



Rev. Martin / Rev. Engel



Dedication Sunday - April 26, 1942



First pastoral acts included the baptism of Virginia Mae Lange. The first confirmands were Albin Stanfel, Jr., Mrs. Martin Birk and Cornell Anton. Donald Raymond and Ruth Lindblad were the couple married in this house of God.

JOHN MARTIN: THE FAMILY MAN







Rev. Martin / Bill Stanfel / Hlene Leise

In August of 1945, Rev. Martin accepted a call to serve Zion Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio. St. Paul's would always remain his first love. Admittedly not a church history enthusiast, I thank all those, who through their "remembering" made the memory of Pastor Martin come alive for me. It became clearly evident from the letters I received from Rev. Martin's parishioners, the love they had for him. This love lives on to this day and is in response to the genuine heart-felt love and concern Rev. Martin had for those he was called to serve. His love of the truth, clearly proclaimed in God's Book of Truth, dictated his life and his ministry, even if it wasn't the popular teaching of the day. With his conviction to God's Word and his dedication to God came the love and respect of his people. This dedication and love is evidenced in the following quotes by one of his parishioners. "Pastor Martin never let anything come before his dedication to God. Even his family took second place." "Pastor always treated everyone alike, if you needed him, he was there, a real friend as well as our Pastor."

I wish to give special thanks to Rev. Martin's widow, Irene Martin, for her loving patience in helping me write this biography. I also thank my God for leading me, through the writing of this paper, to establish a dear new friend. As I consider the ministry and life of Rev. Martin, I thank God for his grace in sending men like Rev. Martin, who labored faithfully in leading lost souls to Christ and in nurturing the flock in which the Lord had entrusted him. As one having now fallen asleep, I look forward to that great day of our Lord, when I shall join with him in heaven to sing the praises of our God.

Scott Martin
May 24, 1989