

Pastor Johann Heinrich Sieker  
1839-1904

Senior Church History  
Second Quarter

by  
Gregory D. Stahlecker

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Johann Heinrich Sieker came from Bavaria to America with his parents as a nine year old boy. Upon their arrival in America they homesteaded at Newtonburg near Manitowoc. When Pastor Streissguth took charge of the congregation there in 1856, he persuaded young Johann to study for the ministry. Pastor Reim of Helenville then became the boy's tutor to prepare him for his studies under C. W. Schaeffer at Gettysburg Seminary.

While the Wisconsin Synod as of this time had no training schools for pastors and teachers, an arrangement made with the Pennsylvania Ministerium made it possible for Sieker to prepare himself for the ministry. In 1858 Sieker was presented to the 1858 convention of the Wisconsin Synod as the first candidate who would successfully complete his studies for the Wisconsin Synod ministry here in America. Besides Sieker Koehler lists three other students who were also to begin their studies at Gettysburg at this time, but failed in their attempts due to various reasons. This shows us incidentally, that the young Wisconsin Synod had problems then as today getting young men to complete the entire course required to enter the ministry. Schaeffer from the Gettysburg Seminary wholeheartedly agreed to the training role. He promised not only free training, but also financial aid. The result was that Sieker could soon go east and begin his studies. Henry E. Jacobs, a fellow student of Sieker's, wrote the following description of Sieker while he attended the Eastern school:

In 1869 at Lancaster my old school-mate, Rev. J. H. Sieker of the Minnesota Synod, who even when in the Preparation Department at Gettysburg took delight in absorbing the time of his class by disputing with the tutor concerning the interpretation of Virgil, had certain exceptions to offer to the Declarations just adopted. Sieker, I may remark, was so superior to the rest of us that, at one bound, he had vaulted from the Preparation Department to the Gettysburg Seminary, leaving the rest of us to plod along in the regular college course. If the leaders of the General Council had known their man better, they would not, it is probable, have paid so much attention to his criticism. He was a crude, conceited German, of large build, carrying himself, when a Preparatorian, with the bearing of an Archbishop, and wearing a coat with remarkably long tails, which he accused my cousin, Luther Jacobs, whether rightly or wrongly I will not say, of fastening to the bench at Prayer Meeting so that when he tried to kneel, he nearly lost his train. . . . The sanctimonious air which had survived his earlier period made his presence somewhat imposing. And so the questions propounded by this very inexperienced delegate from Minnesota were deemed worthy of the attention of a committee consisting of Drs. Seiss, Krauth and C. W. Schaeffer, and convulsed the entire church.<sup>1</sup>

While it is difficult to determine how accurate this description of Sieker truly is, it is evident that at this time as also is the case today, the eastern type of Lutheranism was not much impressed with what the more conservative midwestern type of Lutheranism had to offer.

After graduating from Gettysburg, Sieker's first call brought him to Salem of Granville Township, Wisconsin, in 1863. He was the first resident pastor of this congregation which was one of the founding congregations of the Wisconsin Synod. Under his leadership the congregation flourished. Growth during this period made it necessary to build a new church. It was dedicated in 1863 and for more than 110 years it served the congregation. As one of the founding congregations this building still stands as a landmark. At this time Sieker was also a member of Northwestern College's board of trustees and was appointed by the synod to sell the "scholarships" in the Martin program to increase the enrollment. Koehler does not mention anything about Sieker's

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<sup>1</sup>Henry E. Horn, ed., Memoirs of Henry Lyster Jacob (Published by ed., 1974), II, 191.

involvement in this program other than that he sold the scholarships which were eventually discontinued because of difficulties encountered with the program.<sup>2</sup>

From Salem in Granville Sieker was called to Trinity in St. Paul, Minnesota. Fachtmann was his predecessor here. This was in October of 1867. At this time he was granted his release from the Wisconsin Synod and the following May he became president of the Minnesota Synod. And this election, Koehler says: "inaugurated a new period in the Minnesota Synod's history."<sup>3</sup> Shortly before this time Heyer and Fachtmann had attended the Reading, Pennsylvania, meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. It was here that Minnesota joined the General Council which could only mean the orthodoxy of the Minnesota Synod was being put into jeopardy. This membership was a bone of contention which would later on prevent Minnesota and Wisconsin from establishing closer relations. But under the guidance of Sieker Minnesota would eventually drop out of the General Council and the way for closer relations between Minnesota and Wisconsin would be paved.

In May of 1868 Streissguth represented Wisconsin at the Minnesota synod meeting. The following month Streissguth and Sieker reported to the Racine meeting of the Wisconsin Synod that Minnesota wished to join forces with Wisconsin. President Eading expressed his approval of such a union and assured the proponents of the request that Wisconsin would do its part in bringing this union into reality. The assembly endorsed Eading's statements and instructed him to send a delegate to Minnesota's next synod meeting. But at the same time while Wisconsin at this same

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<sup>2</sup>J. P. Koehler. History of the Wisconsin Synod. St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970. p122ff

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p128

made a definite break with the General Council on account of the Four Points, Minnesota still remained a member. Through Fachtmann and Heyer's influence Minnesota was willing to make certain concessions to the Council, even though it had declared against such things as secret societies among its own members two years before in the case of Dr. Bleeker, pastor of Red Wing.<sup>4</sup>

The next meeting to unite the two synods was held at LaCrosse in September, 1869. Bading and Hoenecke represented Wisconsin. Sieker and several other pastors represented Minnesota. After some discussion the only question which arose was whether Minnesota was conscience-bound to immediately sever its relations with the General Council. The Wisconsin Synod did not press this point as long as Minnesota would consistently protest against everything in the Council that was in conflict with sound Lutheranism. Still however Wisconsin stopped short of establishing complete union with Minnesota.

the time is too short sufficiently to weigh all the circumstances and possible consequences of such a step, and again, the approval of the majority of both synods' congregations would have to be obtained, and such a union should be based on closer acquaintance.

However, the committee recommends that Synod decide to enter with the Venerable Synod of Minnesota into the same or a similar relation as with the Synod of Missouri, by virtue of the unity of doctrine witnessed to by the representatives of both. This will afford the opportunity for both synods steadily to come closer to each other and to arrive at the terms under which sooner or later a closer union can be established.

Meanwhile our Synod pledges itself to recommend a suitable number of its candidates trained at the theological seminary to the Venerable Synod of Minnesota, providing the latter will pledge itself to support our institutions according to its means.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p132

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p132

After this statement a lively discussion followed ending with the resolution that the Wisconsin Synod "continue for the time being the association with the Venerable Synod of Minnesota as carried on hitherto."<sup>6</sup>

Evidently with some frustration when Sieker submitted his presidential report the Minnesota Synod, he added to the above report the information that union between Wisconsin and Minnesota was being prevented by three members of the Wisconsin Synod who feared that the Wisconsin Synod would be reversing its decision to break off from the General Council if it established complete fellowship with Minnesota. Later letters to Bading from Sieker reveal that these three men were Ernst, Adelberg, and Dammann. Sieker felt that these three men along with Koehler were too much pro-Missouri, while Bading alone maintained Wisconsin's independence of Missouri. Although Dammann was a brother-in-law of Sieker's this did not exclude him from criticism. And Koehler defends Dammann by saying that Sieker probably misjudged his own brother-in-law. For Dammann conducted his parish affairs in such a way as to quite clearly disprove Sieker's criticism.<sup>7</sup> And in the case of Koehler the author defends himself by stating that:

... Koehler's extensive correspondence of the time reveals that he was indeed a defender of pure doctrine and practice and hence kindly disposed toward Missouri, but otherwise abominated everything that savored of "synodical politics and contriving," no matter in whose favor.<sup>8</sup>

While Sieker was disappointed in his efforts to establish complete union with Wisconsin, all the while he was no doubt somewhat hesitant

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p132

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p166

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p166

to move to completely sever Minnesota's ties with the General Council because of his training in the East at Gettysburg. He had friends and contacts there and during his first pastorate at Granville, had worked among a group of Pennsylvanians for many years. Therefore Minnesota's break with the General Council was more gradual. But as time passed and the General Council steadfastly maintained its lax stand in pulpit and altar fellowship Minnesota bowed out. And in this establishment of firm Biblical confession by the Minnesota Synod the name most frequently mentioned is that of Sieker.<sup>9</sup> His call to Minnesota certainly played a part in the general improvement of Minnesota's theological position.<sup>10</sup>

In 1876 Sieker accepted a call to St. Matthew's in New York City, the oldest Lutheran congregation in the United States. St. Matthew's had maintained its confessional stand in the midst of the Eastern confusion. When it needed a successor to its pastor it at this time turned to the west. Sieker with his Eastern connections, was a likely candidate and accepted. In 1881 he joined the Missouri Synod, and St. Matthew's followed suit in 1885. He was succeeded at Trinity by Srehr of Sheboygan, and as Minnesota Synod president by A. Kuhn. In 1861 Sieker helped found Concordia Collegiate Institute (later Concordia College), at St. Matthew's. Evidently the academy at St. Matthew's was changed over into the college.

In 1904 at the age of sixty-five Sieker died having done his part in the Lord's Kingdom on earth. The Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Synod certainly has to be thankful to the Lord for supplying shepherds such as this man who contributed so much towards establishing orthodox Lutheranism in that state and beyond its borders.

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<sup>9</sup>Manfred J. Lenz. Golden Jubilee History of the Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Syn. Lutheran Synod and its Member Congregations, 1818-1918, Minneapolis: 1969. pp18,19

## Bibliography

Horn, Henry E. Memoirs of Henry Eyster Jacob. Published by the editor, 1974. Two volumes. Volume II.

Koehler, J. P. The History of the Wisconsin Synod. St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970.

Lenz, Manfred J. Golden Jubilee History of the Minnesota District of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod and its Member Congregations, 1918-1968.

Other sources include: The Lutheran Cyclopedia, anniversary booklets from Salem Ev. Lutheran Church, Granville, WI and Trinity, St. Paul, MN. A letter requesting information was sent to St. Matthew's in New York City but was never acknowledged.



## BRIEFS FROM THE HISTORY OF LUTHERANISM IN MINNESOTA

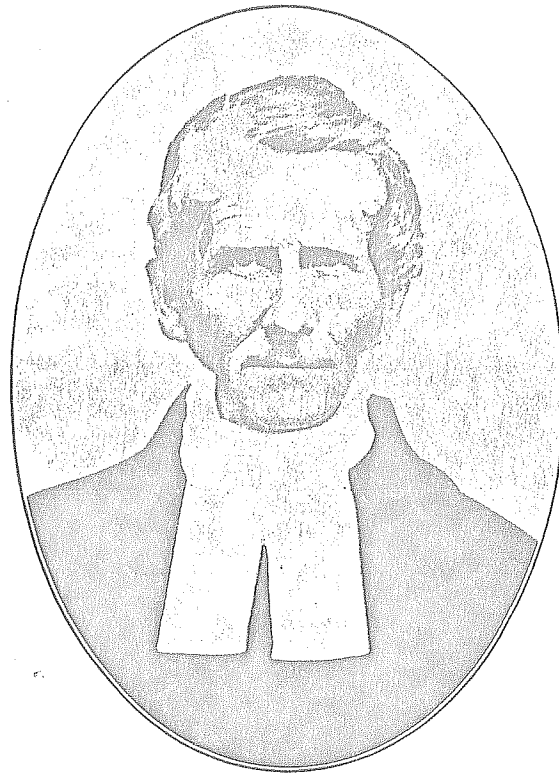
In 1840 settlers began to arrive in Minnesota and in 1849 the number was large enough that the area was organized as the Territory of Minnesota. In 1858 Minnesota was admitted to statehood. Saint Paul was officially incorporated as a City on March 4th, 1854. Its population at that time was 4716. There were several churches but no Lutheran Church founded by German Lutherans.

In the middle of July 1855 Rev. William Wier arrived in Saint Paul and began missionary work among German Lutherans. We hereby give a summary of his pastoral activities:

*Pastor William Wier, the First Lutheran Pastor in St. Paul of Synodical Conference Affiliation.*

1. Arrival in St. Paul about July 15th, 1855.
2. First sermon preached Sunday, July 22nd, 1855.
3. On July 27th some sort of a business meeting was held and Pastor Wier was called as pastor.
4. July 29th the first sermon was preached by the newly called Pastor.
5. First official meeting was held September 14th and the articles of incorporation were duly drawn up and adopted.

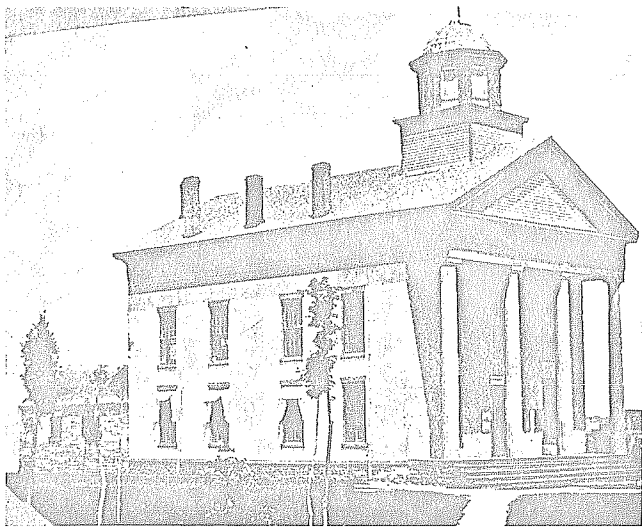
Services were held in the Episcopal church building until August 5th. A child was to be baptized in this service and the Episcopal minister refused to give permission for this ceremony in his church. The service was then held in the City Hall. Later services were conducted by Pastor Wier in a school building located on Fort Street. In the month of August, 1855, Pastor Wier began to hold services for the Lutheran settlers in the neighborhood of Stillwater and organized St. John's Lutheran Congregation of Baytown, Washington County, Minnesota. The Pastor had charge of the two congregations for a period of two years.



Pastor William Wier

Pastor Wier officiated at thirty-six baptisms; he served at nine wedding ceremonies and conducted eight funerals. Congregational meetings were held at various intervals and the business of the congregation was taken care of. In the fall of 1857 Pastor Wier resigned.

The second pastor of the congregation was C. F. Heyer, sent out by an Eastern missionary association. He served from November 22, 1857, to May, 1862. During this time the inner condition of the congregation was improved by the adoption of a constitution covering all points of the congregational affairs. The membership was constantly increased by immigrants from Germany and the need of a church building became more apparent. In February of 1858 the congregation purchased the lot on the corner of Wabasha and Tenth Streets, and in the same year building operations were started. The congregation planned to erect a two-story stone building with dimensions of 50 by 80 feet. The upper story was to serve as the church auditorium and the lower floor was to house the pastor's residence; school and confirmation classroom. However, the congregation succeeded in finishing only a part of the lower story and on October 17th, 1858, the first service was held in the new building. Before the entire structure could be finished the Civil War of 1861 to 1865 came and with it many difficulties for the congregation. Nevertheless another section of the building was made ready for use and dedicated on October 18th, 1863. Shortly after the end of the war the congregation for the third time made special efforts to complete the building according to the original plans. The



—By Courtesy of Pioneer Press Library

*The old Ramsey County Court House, where Pastor Wier conducted many of his services.  
Pastor William Wier*

work was finished in December, 1866, and on December 26th, 1866, was dedicated to the service of the Triune God in a special service in which the Pastors F. W. Hoffman, A. Kuhn and G. Fachtmann officiated. The latter had been pastor of the congregation since June 11, 1862, and served until 1867. During the succeeding vacancy the congregation was served by the former Pastor C. H. Heyer and Pastor A. Kuhn. J. H. Sicker was installed as Pastor of Trinity on October 31, 1867. During his pastorate the congregation erected a parsonage located on Tglehart Avenue. In 1876 Pastor O. Spehr took charge of Trinity and was succeeded in 1879 by Pastor M. Tirmenstein. The day of his installation was March 16, 1879, and he served for a period of fourteen years. Pastor A. Schroedel was called as his successor and was installed on August 13th, 1893. He served the congregation faithfully over sixteen years when the Lord called him to his eternal rest on November 21, 1909. His earthly remains are sleeping in our Elmhurst Cemetery awaiting the glorious day of resurrection.

Pastor A. C. Haase received the call from Trinity and accepted it. He was installed by Pastor John Plocher on March 6, 1910. The time of his service in Trinity is, therefore, more than forty-five years at this writing.

As early as 1870 it became evident that the quarters of the congregation on Wabasha and Tenth Streets were not sufficiently large to accommodate the increasing number of hearers at the services and the pupils enrolled in the school. A committee was appointed to select a location large enough for the erection of a church and a school. Upon recommendation of this committee the site on the corner of Wabasha and Tilton Streets was purchased by the congregation in the year 1877. Realizing the importance of Christian education the congregation decided to build a school. The structure was of brick with four classrooms and was dedicated in June 1880, and has served its purpose until it was now wrecked to make room for the Capitol Approach Park.

To provide ample room for the increasing number of hearers at divine worship the building of the second church was begun in 1884. The outside dimensions of the building were 60 by 120 feet and all parts of the most substantial character. The beautiful building with its interior finishing and its new pipe organ was not completed until the spring of 1886. April 11, 1886, the day of its dedication, was a day of rejoicing for the members of Trinity.

Having been organized by missionaries Trinity has always shown great interest in missions. Realizing the importance of missionary work among the children, the early pastors not only conducted their services, but served as teachers in the Sunday School and in the Christian Day School. The first teacher was called in 1864, and ever since the work in the Christian Day School has been carried on by duly called teachers. Trinity is now affiliated with the Central Lutheran School, located at Lexington and Englewood Avenue.

Organized as a Lutheran congregation of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession Trinity had many opportunities of proving its loyalty to this confession.

At first it was necessary to awaken the proper consciousness of obligation to the confessions of the Lutheran church, and later to strengthen the members in faithfully adhering to them and to act in accordance therewith. This loyalty was manifested by affiliating with the Synodical Conference, by its definite stand against secretism, by its insistence to administer holy communion in accordance with the order established by the Lutheran church, and finally by remaining loyal to its present synod.

Another beautiful characteristic of Trinity's members is their loyalty to their home church. With the growth of the City of Saint Paul it was but natural that many members took up their residence near the outskirts of the community. Other Lutheran churches were in the neighborhood. But these members remained with Trinity and after it became clear that the State would take over our property they voted to rebuild in the downtown area of St. Paul.

After the Legislature of Minnesota had enacted laws to enlarge the Capitol Approach Park, the congregation realized that it would have to give up all of its property; church, school and parsonage, so on January 8, 1945 a committee was appointed to watch developments on the proposed capitol approach. On February 2, 1948, the first offer was made by the Capitol approach commission and they were as follows:

Church building . . . . .	\$109,192.00
School building . . . . .	14,086.00
Land . . . . .	15,800.00
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	\$139,078.00

On February 28, 1948, the Trustees of the church were authorized to place an option on land suitable for the site of a new church. On April 25, 1949, the congregation authorized the trustees to convey to the State of Minnesota titles to our properties for the following amount:

Church building . . . . .	\$123,786.00
School building . . . . .	14,086.00
Land . . . . .	15,800.00
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	\$153,672.00

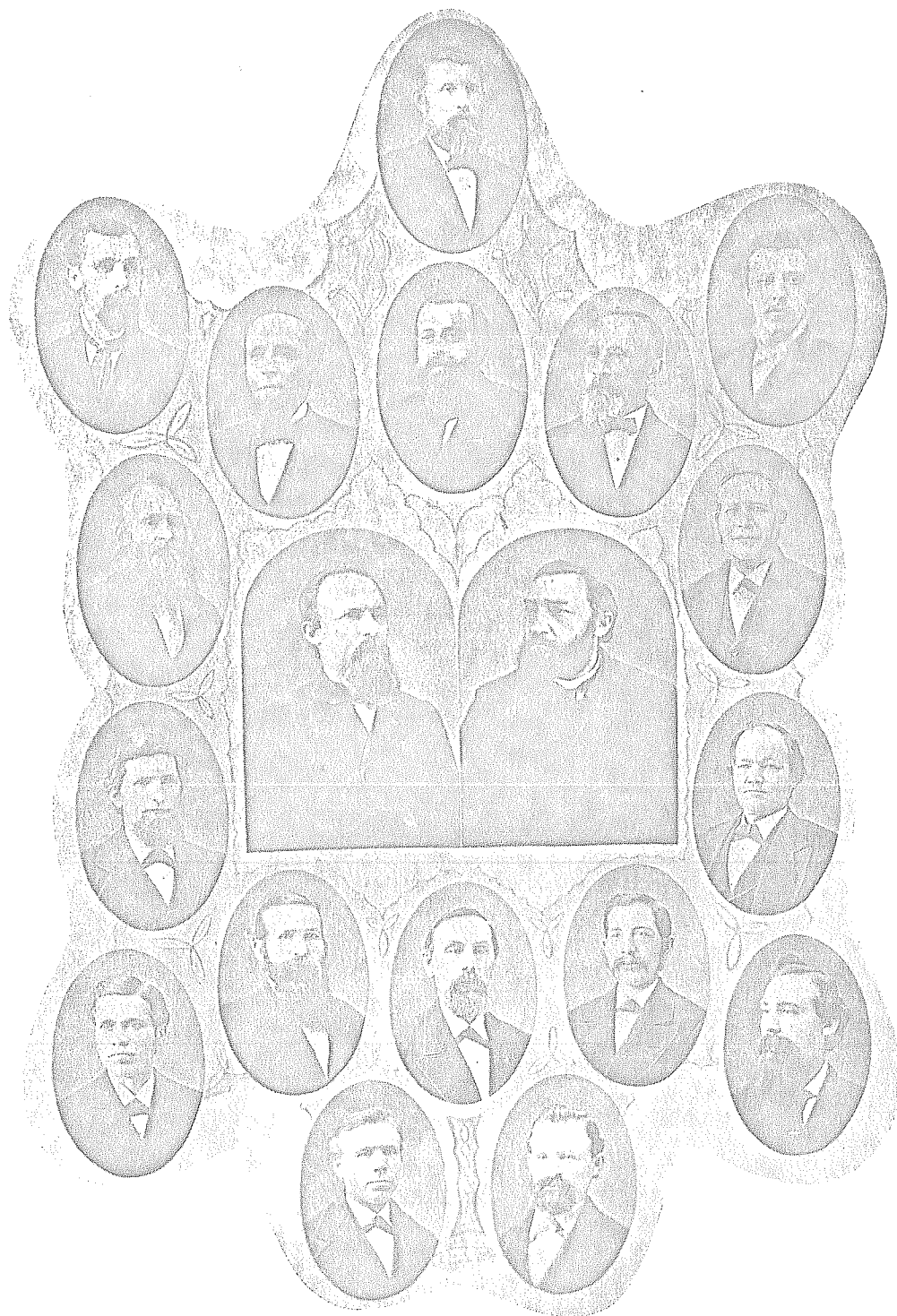
On June 6, 1949, the Trustees were authorized to purchase land suitable for the use of the congregation's new buildings. Max and Gerald Buctow were engaged as architects to draw plans and supervise building operations. February 13, 1950 preliminary plans of a new church and Parish Hall to be located in the downtown area were adopted. On April 10, 1950, the trustees reported the land on Rice and Aurora had been purchased for the new buildings and on June 22, 1950, the congregation decided to build a church and parish hall. The ground-breaking took place on September 17, 1950, and the cornerstone was laid on May 20, 1951.

The new Church was finished in the middle of November, 1951. The guest speakers were Pastor Oscar Naumann, Pastor C. P. Koch, and Pastor Raymond Haase.

We still have a large amount of debts and we must all work together to pay our financial obligations promptly.

We now bring the officers and the societies who are all consecrated to the purpose of maintaining a truly Lutheran congregation in the days to come.

## PASTORS AND OFFICERS OF TRINITY ABOUT SEVENTY YEARS AGO



(We were unable to check on first names so we give the family names of all except the pastors.)

*On top: Schroeder.*

*Second row, left to right: Teacher Fischer, Jahn, Paar, Thomas, Teacher von Schlichting.*

*Third row, left to right: Schroeder, Haas.*

*Center, left to right: Pastor M. Tirmenstein, Pastor O. Spehr.*

*Fourth row, left to right: Wilken, Hensel.*

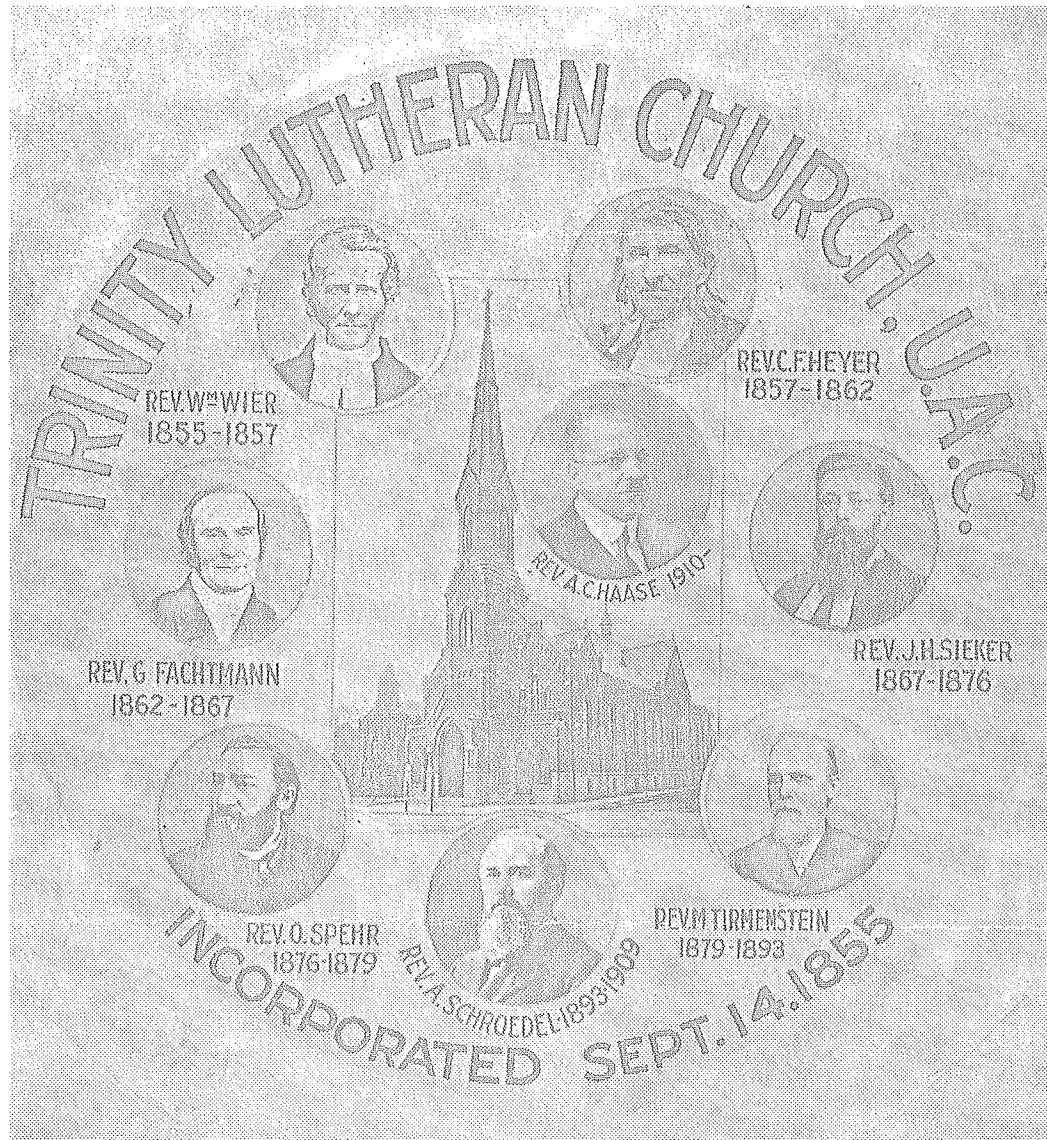
*Fifth row, left to right: Teacher Schumacher, Siggelkow, Gerber, Gall, Teacher Zeige.*

*At bottom: Ellet, Richter.*

Let the unselfish consecrated devotion of these untiring workers be an inspiration for all of us to work in the same spirit of devotion to maintain Trinity as a live active congregation serving diligently for the welfare of the Master's Kingdom.

THE SECOND HOUSE OF WORSHIP

1886 to 1951



Trinity School served its purpose—September, 1880 to July, 1951. The Church was the gathering place from April 11, 1886 to November 11, 1951. Church and school were wrecked by the State of Minnesota in the fall of 1951.