

# *150 Years of God's Grace*

## A Brief History of St. John's Lutheran Congregation Slades Corners, Wisconsin

1858 - 2008



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Any story 150 years long could fill a large book. The story of the Lutheran congregation at Slades Corners, Wisconsin is no exception. My purpose in this paper is not to compile a book but rather to offer a brief history of the congregation that fills out information already summarized in various anniversary pamphlets developed for the congregation. I will also offer a little more information on the background and life of the various pastors that served the congregation.

Slades Corners is a small unincorporated community in southwestern Kenosha County, Wisconsin. Currently it has 20 or so houses, a well-drilling company, an auto supply store, a mushroom farm, a local restaurant-tavern and across the street from the tavern a white clapboard church. It would not be listed on a "great places" tour of Wisconsin. In the eyes of many it is not very significant. Yet for a little over 150 years a congregation of faithful Lutheran believers have gathered in Slades Corners to worship the one true God. "Wherever two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." says our Lord in Matthew 18:20. Therefore in God's eyes, Slades Corners is a place dear to his heart. Here he has saved and strengthened people through Word and Sacrament. Here he has guided and blessed a group of his people. The history of this congregation and the pastors who served here is a part of His story and so it is important not only to the members of this congregation but also for the Church at large.

### **The Congregation Takes Shape**

About 8 years before Wisconsin became a state, an early resident, Tom Slade, settled Slades Corners. He held about 640 acres of land in the area. Slades Corners became a part of the town of Wheatland when it was formed on May 7, 1842. Wheatland was so named because of its rich soil, making it a prime area for farming. Many of the farmers and others who were attracted to this area of Wisconsin were German immigrants. These immigrants brought their families,

hopes for the future, trades and tools to forge for themselves a new existence in this land of fresh opportunities and challenges. Many of these immigrants also brought with them their Lutheran faith and recognized their need for God's Means of Grace.

The story of the Slades Corners congregation begins around 1853. In the nearby town of Bloomfield, a Lutheran pastor Memminger was working among Saxons who had come from Wernshausen. They did not have a church building and so services were held in homes and schoolhouses. The pastor lived in various homes of the people he served. In Wheatland, a reformed pastor by the name of Weichsel was working. New Munster, to the east of Slades Corners, already had a Catholic church gathered into a congregation (St. Alphonsus). On the road from Lake Geneva to Kenosha was an English Baptist Church. A German Methodist preacher named Becker was also very active in the area trying to gather German immigrants into a Methodist congregation.

In this setting a Lutheran man, Mr. George Rosenhauer, began assembling a growing congregation of Lutherans in Slades Corners. Every Sunday he went with his family to Slades Corners and there conducted a lay divine service and read from a sermon book. Once in a while Lutheran pastors from Racine and Kenosha were able to come and helped strengthen the congregation. When the Lutheran Pastor Memminger from Bloomfield took a call to Burr Oak in 1855 many of the Saxons from Bloomfield began coming to the gatherings in Slades Corners. The Methodist pastor Becker made some attempts to win over Rosenhauer and turn the Lutheran group towards Methodism, but he resisted the idea. In 1856 Mr. Rosenhauer made contact with the young Wisconsin Synod. The synod sent pastors to do mission work in the area. Among those who preached in this area from time to time were "Muehlhaeuser, Bading, Weinmann,

Weizer, Stark, Hoffman, Brenner, Conrad, Wald, and Gensicke.”<sup>1</sup> A group of Lutherans from the nearby town of Burlington also often traveled the 7 miles south to the services in Slades Corners. When Mr. Rosenhauer made contact with the Wisconsin Synod this Burlington group requested that Lutheran services be held in Burlington as well. In 1858 a man from the Wisconsin Synod accepted the call to be the pastor of both groups. His name was C. F. Goldammer.

### **Pastor C. F. Goldammer 1858 - 1862**

Pastor Carl Frederick Goldammer had been serving congregations in Manitowoc when he accepted the call to Slades Corners. He had been born in Ursperg, Saxony, in Germany on February 9, 1821. He had enrolled at the Rhenish Mission at Erlangen in 1846 but he struggled with the languages. He then trained in the Barmen Mission School and finally was sent to America by the Langenberg Society to serve German settlers in Dodge County, Wisconsin. There he worked for a time gathering Lutherans into congregations. The Wisconsin <sup>6</sup>synod was only 1 year old when he was ordained by the Synod and signed the Synod constitution in June of 1851. He then began to gather St. John's congregation in Netwonburg and served much of the area, establishing many preaching stations and forming numerous other congregations in the area. At this time there were only 5 ordained pastors in the Wisconsin Synod and they were urged to cover as much territory as they possibly could. Pastor Goldammer seems to have done that in every area he served. In 1855 Pastor Goldammer accepted a call to serve the congregation in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Again he served as much of the outlying area as he could, establishing preaching places and gathering Lutherans together in Shoto, Two Rivers, Mishicot, Two Creeks and Reedsville. He also taught school in Manitowoc. In 1856 the

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<sup>1</sup> Wolff, Robert F. F. (Translated by Frederic Kosanke) “Commemorative Book in Remembrance of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Congregation at Slades Corners, Kenosha Co., Wis. on October 11, 1908” Standard Democrat, Burlington, WI. 1908. p. 9

congregation in Manitowoc built their first church building. Pastor Goldammer accepted the call to Slades Corners and Burlington in 1858.

When Pastor Goldammer accepted the call extended to him through G. Rosenhauer, he took up residence in Burlington. He officially gathered and served two Lutheran congregations in 1858, St. Johns in Slades Corners and St. Johns in Burlington. There were a number of Germans in the group at Slades Corners who were not really Lutheran, but rather Reformed. Since the State Church system in Germany had forced Lutherans and Reformed to worship together, many Germans in America were used to this kind of arrangement and found it natural and expedient to worship together. The Reformed element at Slades Corners were against having a Lutheran Pastor, such as Goldammer, because they knew the congregation would have more Lutheran teaching and practice instead of Reformed. Up to this point no specific confession had been accepted by the congregation.

C. F. Goldammer was a faithful, hardworking, mission-minded pioneer pastor. He preferred Lutheran doctrine and practice but Goldammer seems to have had no qualms about serving both Lutherans and Reformed. He did, however, recognize the danger in trying to please both groups with church practices. In the 1854 Synodical proceedings Goldammer protested a decision by the synod to allow Reformed practices for Communion and tone back some of the Lutheran practices in J. J. E. Sauer's congregation at Slinger. "He explained that this duality in Holy Communion contradicted the very essence of Communion which is to demonstrate the closest communion and unity."<sup>2</sup> Still Goldammer continued for some time to serve both Lutherans and Reformed. This was consistent with how he had been trained in Germany.

In October 1858 Goldammer helped to organize the congregation in Slades Corners and Burlington as Evangelical Lutheran congregations pledged to the <sup>u</sup>unaltered Augsburg

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<sup>2</sup> Synod Convention Proceedings from 1854

Confession. The Slades Corners Congregation's first name was "The Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Congregation of the Towns of Wheatland, Hudson and Bloomfield."

Soon the Civil War broke out and some of the congregation members fought in it. You can see their graves in the cemetery to this day. The Burlington and Slades Corners congregations were very poor at this time. They paid pastor Goldammer in grain and foodstuffs which he would have to sell if he wanted cash. Unfortunately no congregation records exist from this time period. They are believed to have been lost between 1860-1864 when many of the Saxons moved to Burr Oak. This departure was tough for the congregation because the Saxons had been the most confessional. During the following years Germans from Pommerania, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg began to fill the congregation. In 1862 Pastor Goldammer accepted a call to Jefferson, Wisconsin. He was installed there in February of 1863. During the vacancy in Slades Corners Lutheran pastors from Racine and Kenosha came and served the congregation with Word and Sacrament. Rosenhauer also started doing lay services again.

#### **Pastor C. Titze 1862- 1865**

Pastor C. Titze became pastor of the two congregations in Slades Corners and Burlington sometime around 1862. He had come to America as a result of Wisconsin Synod President Muehlhauser's appeals to Germany for more pastors. He may have come back with Muehlhauser when he returned from his 1862 Jubilee trip to Germany. Titze was already "well along in years" at this time. He had trained for Missionary work in Berlin and had a background as a teacher. In America he substituted for Pastor Moldehnke in Germany, Wisconsin for a short time and had also done so for Goldammer in Burlington. In 1862 he was examined and ordained by the Central Conference of the synod and installed at Burlington.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Koehler, J. P. "The History of the Wisconsin Synod." Sentinel Publishing Company, St. Cloud, MN 1970. p 87.

During Titze's ministry the congregation in Slades Corners wanted to build a church but there was strife between the Lutheran and Reformed elements over where the church should be built. The Reformed wanted it in New Munster. The Lutherans wanted it in Slades Corners. There were a number of petty problems between the groups that kept cropping up and meetings often got argumentative. Pastor Titze was often misunderstood and seems to have tried to mediate between the two groups without much success.

During Titze's ministry the congregation officially incorporated, finishing that on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1864. It was registered with the register of deeds on June 8, 1865. The name was changed again to "The Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Congregation of the town of Wheatland, Kenosha County, Wisconsin." Mr. G. Rosenhauer, Mr. W. Holle and Mr. C. Amborn were named as trustees of the congregation. They purchased an acre of land near Slades Corners for the church building and cemetery. They likely bypassed the other trustees who were Reformed. Thus the Reformed members weren't mentioned or represented in the deed at all. They paid \$100 for the land. The church was constructed in 1866 and the members helped build it at a final cost of around \$1000. It was dedicated in the fall of 1866. Without the church records many of the remaining details of this time are impossible to determine, but at the end of 1866 Pastor Titze is no longer serving the congregation.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps because of the strife in the congregations and his advanced years, Titze left the Wisconsin Synod. (Some time later Pastor Titze is known to have served St. Peter's congregation in Wilmot, which was not part of the Wisconsin Synod at the time.) Around the time of Titze's departure the dual parish arrangement between Burlington and Slades Corners was discontinued. Each congregation would have its own pastor.

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<sup>4</sup> According to Synodical Records Titze attended both the 1864 and 1865 Synod Conventions and served on a committee "on the Treasurer's report" at convention in 1864.

### **Pastor Wilhelm Stoerkel<sup>5</sup> 1866 - 1868**

The congregation in Slades Corners then called Pastor W. Stoerkel, who had been pastor at Friedens in Kenosha. He was the first pastor to make his home in Slades Corners. Since there was no parsonage and Stoerkel was a single man, he lived at G. Rosenhauer's house.

(Goldammer and Titze had lived in Burlington). Wilhelm K. Stoerkel had been born December 13, 1839 in Norka Russia, a Volga Russian Colony inhabited by many Germans. He was ordained in July of 1864 in Ravensburg, Wuerttemberg, and in October he sailed to America and made contact with the Wisconsin Synod in Milwaukee. He inquired of Gottlieb Reim about working with the Wisconsin Synod and Reim invited him to join the Synod as an advisory member. Stoerkel had first been assigned to Kenosha and 2 years later he accepted the call to Slades Corners.

During Stoerkel's ministry the congregation decided to purchase a Melodeon to accompany the congregational singing. The pastor in Slades Corners also began to serve the congregation in Wilmot for a time. Soon the congregation successfully paid off the debt for the building and were in good financial standing. This may be a result of a new stricter offering policy. The congregation discontinued the practice of free-will offering and members were expected to "help carry the burdens of the congregation."<sup>6</sup> If they did not they lost their right of church membership and the benefits. Thus congregational "dues" were introduced which was a practice that continued for many years into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Some members who had left and joined the Methodists returned to the congregation during the ministry of Stoerkel. This may be a result of Stoerkel's doctrine and practice because he started having gatherings called "prayer hours" and began preaching false doctrine. Pastor

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<sup>5</sup> His name has been spelled various ways because in many records it is spelled "Staerkel." I chose to retain the spelling given in Wolff's 50 year history of the congregation.

<sup>6</sup> Wolff, pg 15.



Wolff in his 50-year history of the congregation tells us that Stoerkel did his work, was an example of piety in his life but was of a “pietistic and fanatic nature.”<sup>7</sup> In the winter of 1867 and 1868 he published 2 booklets that contained false doctrines about the <sup>l</sup>ast days. He preached the false doctrine of Millennialism that Christ would come and physically reign 1000 years on earth. He also produced a few booklets that would spell the end of his ministry in America. He wrote a booklet called “666” in which he claimed to find the numerical value of the animal in Revelations, Chapter 13 and the literal meaning of the number 666. He interpreted some of the prophecies in Ezekiel and Daniel as predicting literal things in past and contemporary history. He also set the date for the Lord’s Second Coming for 1908. A few of the members followed his errors, because he spoke with great personal conviction, but others shook their heads.<sup>8</sup> Members of the local Roman Catholic Church hated him and according to Wolff some of them even threatened to kill Stoerkel.

Soon the Wisconsin Synod got involved. Pastors of the Southern Conference to which Stoerkel belonged reviewed his pamphlets and according to the proceedings determined that they “not only contained quite unsound and unlutheran doctrine concerning the last things but which also gave evidence of great *schwaermerei*.”<sup>9</sup> When he refused to give up his position at the urging of the conference pastors, his case was referred to the synod president who asked Stoerkel to discuss the matter with him in Watertown. Instead Pastor Stoerkel asked to be released from the synod and announced his intention to return to Russia, to his home in the Volga colony. It seems he deceived the congregation about these intentions. Pastor Wolff, quoting the congregational record, says, “Pastor Stoerkel, in the summer of 1868, made a trip to his homeland in Russia and, therefore, requested vacation time from the congregation. In his

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<sup>7</sup> Wolff p. 15-16

<sup>8</sup> Wolff p. 17-18

<sup>9</sup> Koehler p. 104

homeland however, he made the decision there to take over a position as pastor, and the congregation was set into the position of need by this action to find and call another pastor.”<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after his arrival in Russia on July 4, 1868 Stoerkel married Beatte Bonwetsch, a daughter of Christoph Heinrich Bonwetsch, who was a pastor at Norka. By 1878 Stoerkel is reported to have been a “Probst” and Pastor in the Norkish District of Russia.

Stoerkel’s doctrine and sudden departure had caused error and confusion to run rampant in the congregation. They <sup>congregation</sup> contacted the institution in Watertown for help. Thus, Synod Pastors Bading and Streissguth often came down to the area to bring peace to the congregation.

### **Pastor J. J. E. Sauer 1869-1873**

In his providence the Lord provided an able and faithful pastor to restore peace to the congregation and to end the unionism that had been tolerated up to this point. Pastor John Jacob Elias Sauer accepted the call to Slades Corners in the spring of 1869. He, like Goldammer, was a faithful Lutheran pioneer pastor and missionary. He had been born April 12, 1827 in the village of Eckstedt, near Weimar in Thuringia, Germany. His father had been the night watchman in the village. In Germany he had held jobs as a field laborer and a secretary to a judge in Weimar. In 1845 he began training to become a teacher in Weimar. In the Revolution of 1848 he was drafted into the military, but by special request was able to avoid service and immigrated to America. He arrived in Milwaukee via New York in 1849 and served as a teacher at the Christian Day School of St. John’s Lutheran Church on Vliet Street. When the pastor was absent, he also substituted for him by preaching. He was married there in 1850. In 1851, because of a shortage of pastors the Synod President sent him as a pastor-in-training to a church at Calumet-Malone where he was likely succeeded by John Bading in 1853. Sauer was finally ordained by the synod at the 1855 convention in Milwaukee. He then served a church in Slinger, Wisconsin, that had both

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<sup>10</sup> Wolff p. 18.

Reformed and Lutheran elements in it. He upset the Reformed members by introducing distinctly Lutheran practices and the <sup>§</sup>Synod became involved in the controversy. Sauer lost his first wife and a daughter to cholera in 1854 and he remarried in 1855. He then accepted a call to Horicon, Wisconsin, in 1859. He accepted a call to Iron Ridge, Wisconsin, in 1863. He served as teacher as well as pastor and also helped the <sup>§</sup>Synod train candidates for the ministry before there was a seminary. He and his family of 8 children moved to Slades Corners in 1869.

Pastor Sauer took a firm and well-needed stance and insisted on Lutheran practice in the Slades Corners congregation. On June 21, 1869, the congregation passed the motion that 1) all the members sign the church book 2) if you desire the Lord's <sup>§</sup>supper you must first become a member of the congregation. 3) The liturgy is to be used in the divine service. The Reformed became especially upset when Pastor Sauer introduced small wafers instead of bread made with yeast in the Lord's Supper. When on Palm Sunday Mr. Rosenhauer had made a crucifix and placed it upon the altar, one of the Reformed-leaning members took his child who was sitting up front to be confirmed and left the church and the congregation. During these years the Reformed element of the congregation gradually left and formed their own church near New Munster.

Because Pastor Sauer had a "rather numerous"<sup>11</sup> family the church needed a parsonage. At the time Pastor Sauer lived 3 miles from the church in a very poor block house which the congregation rented. The issue of the parsonage was a matter of contention in the congregation. Some wanted to buy a house that belonged to Bernhard Smitz (a prominent citizen of Slades Corners who had purchased half of Tom Slades' land). Others wanted to purchase the English Baptist parsonage, with the possibility of purchasing their church building as well. They ruled out both options. Finally after further debate, the congregation elders decided to buy the Maas

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<sup>11</sup> Wolff p. 20.

house and an acre of land for \$1,200. (Bill Maas, another prominent early resident of Slades Corners owned the blacksmith shop in town).

Pastor Sauer, as the other pastors before him, also conducted the congregation's school. His teaching background gave him excellent credentials as a teacher and the students at Slades Corners benefited from his experience. In the year 1869 a singing group was also organized at Slades Corners.

Because the Reformed element of the congregation had left, the congregation struggled financially. They had great difficulty paying Pastor Sauer, who also had a large family to support. His annual pay was to be \$350 but from 1872-1873 he was only paid \$283.44. To try to solve the problem individual members of the congregation paid a subscription of between \$10-\$25 each.

In the summer of 1873 Pastor Sauer accepted a call to Leeds Wisconsin. His eldest son, Paul, decided to stay behind in Slades Corners. In 1869 Paul had become the congregation's organist at the age of 17 and served in this capacity <sup>pay.</sup> Paul Sauer remained the organist at St. Johns for 41 years until his death on June 26, 1910. He also became a rather prominent citizen of the area. Paul ran a grocery store in Slades Corners. After his death "Sauer's Store" provided electricity for Slades Corners houses. Paul Sauer also founded the Slades Corners newspaper called the "Mugwump" in 1892. It was printed weekly until the mid-1940s.

Paul's Father, J. J. E. Sauer went on from Leeds in 1880 accepting the call to serve St. John's Lutheran Church in East Bloomfield, Fremont, Wisconsin. He and his wife had a total of 15 children, the last 2 being born in 1881 and 1883, though the youngest died when he was not even a month old. In 1886 Pastor Sauer accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran Church in Bremen, Millville, Minnesota, and joined the Minnesota Synod. Pastor Sauer became severely ill and went

home to heaven while attending the 1889 convention of the Minnesota Synod. He was 62 years old.

### **Pastor J. J. Meyer 1873-1876**

Pastor J. J. Meyer then accepted the call to Slades Corners. He had been born September 25, 1846 in Steckborn, Kanton Thorgau, Switzerland. He lost his parents early in life and also came down with a very serious and protracted illness. These events lead him to place his life in the Lord's service. Thus he entered the Basel Mission <sup>it</sup> house. In 1870 the school sent him to America to enter the ministry in Wisconsin. He learned the doctrines of the Lutheran Church from the Wisconsin Synod and in 1873 accepted his first pastorate, the congregation at Slades Corners.

In the fall of 1873 financial problems and inflation hit the country. Pastor Meyer began his ministry at Slades Corners during this difficult and precarious situation. Many differences arose between the congregation and their pastor about sending children to the congregational school, payment of support for the church and announcements for communion. In 1875 Pastor Meyer and the church council came into some sharp disagreements so much so that the church council disbanded and a new one had to be elected. There is some evidence that Pastor Meyers could be a bit harsh with his people. The church history of the congregation at Burr Oak where he later served says "Pastor Meyer was of a stern nature. He is remembered as having dealt harshly. This gradually brought forth a rebellious spirit in the hearts of many...the congregation sought to terminate his call by appealing to president Von Rohr."<sup>12</sup>

For some time Slades Corners had been sharing their pastor with a congregation of Lutherans in the town of Elkhorn. At the end of May in 1876 Pastor Meyer moved to Elkhorn

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<sup>12</sup> Faith- Life vol XXVII No. 11 November 1955 page 10:

and became their sole pastor. Slades Corners needed to call a new pastor again. Pastor Meyer went on to serve at Friedens, Elkhorn for three years. St. John's Waterloo for 10 years, Christus in Burr Oak for 11 years, St. John's Dundas, Calumet County for 3 years, and Gnaden in Town Maine, Marathon County for 20 years. He retired and moved to Wausau where he went home to heaven in 1927 at the age of 81.

#### **C. F. Goldammer 1876-1884**

Pastor C. F. Goldammer was called back to serve a second time at Slades Corners. After he had left Burlington in 1862 he had served a congregation in Jefferson from 1863-1870 and then in Green Bay from 1870-1876. In 1876 he accepted the call to serve the congregation in Slades Corners where he lived in the parsonage.

During his second period of service at Slades Corners, Pastor Goldammer, ever the missionary, began to serve and gather congregations in Lake Geneva (about 7 miles to the west) and Genoa Junction (now Genoa City which is south and west of Slades Corners).

The congregation also resolved to put an addition onto the parsonage which included a room for school and catechism instruction. Prior to this they had held school between the old church pews. This resolution was not fully carried out until the pastorate of Henry Gieschen.

Financial problems continued to plague the congregation. Goldammer would do whatever it took to serve his people. They could not pay the pastor's salary so Goldammer generously offered to lower it \$25 per year. They still were unable to pay that. The congregation then took the drastic measure of taxing the membership according to their possessions to meet the difference. To ease the pressure Pastor Goldammer again dropped his salary another \$25 per year down to \$350.

Goldammer organized a collection for the new worker training school in Watertown which the congregation zealously took part in. In October of 1884 a new organ was purchased for \$75.

Starting in 1883 Pastor Goldammer began serving the Lutherans in Wilmot. The congregation in Wilmot was divided along with Burlington over the Election Controversy. There were 2 groups. St. Peters which had been served by Pastor Titze who had left the Wisconsin Synod and had also been forced to leave St. Peters by this time. The group at St. Peters was sharing a pastor with the group that broke from the Burlington Congregation in the Election controversy. Pastor Goldammer served the other group which was organized as the German Evangelical Lutheran Church and, since the other group had the church property, this group purchased an old cheese factory and worshipped there.

In December of 1884 Pastor Goldammer received a call to Beaver Dam, WI, and accepted it after much deliberation. It seems he enjoyed his time at Slades Corners and even expressed the wish that he could end his pilgrim journey in this congregation. He served the church in Beaver Dam until 1896 when he became quite ill. He decided to retire with his wife who had stayed by his side 45 years and moved to Omaha, NE. On June 29, 1896 he went home to heaven at the age of 75.

#### **Pastor August F. Graebner 1885-1887**

Pastor August F. Graebner was next to serve at Slades Corners. He had arrived from Germany in New York in 1880. He served as secretary at the Emigrant Home in New York from 1881 to 1882. In 1882 he enrolled at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Milwaukee and was ordained in 1883. He was assigned as a Candidate of Theology after graduation to St. John's

Lutheran Church at Eagleton in Chippewa county Wisconsin. In December 1884 he accepted the call to Slades Corners.

He continued to serve the congregation Goldammer had gathered in Lake Geneva and the preaching station in Genoa Junction. He urged the Genoa group to organize as a congregation. During Graebner's years there was a turn-about in the financial situation. For the first time since the congregation's establishment the treasurer had a surplus. New members were required to pay for their burial plots in the cemetery, but old members had not had to do so. The new members soon had to also pay for the maintenance and upkeep of the congregation and building and so they demanded the same rights as the older members. During this time some church discipline was carried out and a number of members were excommunicated.

Pastor Graebner took a call to Christ Lutheran Church in Burr Oak, Wisconsin. The church history from that congregation describes Graebner in this way, "He was a rolling stone, a roving and adventurous character. He did not remain long enough to make an imprint upon the congregational life. After a year's stay he resigned with the intent to make a trip to Europe. Whether he made this trip is not known. But shortly afterwards he is known to have served a congregation in Arkansas."<sup>13</sup> His name is on the absent pastor list at Synod convention in 1889. It appears that he served Missouri Synod churches in the 1890s, one in Missouri, one in Arkansas and another in the state of Washington. Nothing more is known about him after 1906.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Henry Gieschen 1888- 1891**

Pastor Henry Gieschen Sr. became the next pastor at Slades Corners. He had been born March 10, 1866 in Hanover, Germany, a son of a master carpenter. When he was 17 years old he came down with typhus. When he had recovered, his father and his uncle who was Pastor Johann

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<sup>13</sup> Centennial History of Christ Lutheran in Mindoro

<sup>14</sup> This information is gleaned from notes scribbled on paper in his file at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Archives by the archivist.



Meyer<sup>15</sup> serving at Caledonia Wisconsin urged him to come to America. He started at the Seminary in Milwaukee in 1884 and helped out for his uncle, Pastor Meyer, when he was sick and near death. After his second year at the seminary he received an emergency call and became a *Reiseprediger* or traveling missionary and served seven preaching stations near Menomonee, Wisconsin. Because of the shortage of pastors, he never finished his seminary training, but was ordained by August Pieper in 1886 with whom he became good friends. In 1888 Gieschen accepted the call to serve the Slades Corners and Lake Geneva congregations. In April of 1888 Pastor Gieschen married his wife Lydia. They would have 10 children, 5 sons and 5 daughters.

There was healthy growth and organization in the congregation during this time. The construction of the school addition to the parsonage was completed. The members began to discuss the construction of a new church building. The *Gemeinde-blatt* was widely distributed to the congregation. After the sermon, *Christenlehre* (instruction for the young people) was held. The practice of baptizing children from parents who were not believers was no longer allowed. The use of the church building for other events was restricted and allowed only to members of the congregation. In regard to the reception of new members the following procedure was introduced: "Whoever wishes to join himself to the congregation must announce this to the pastor and the church council. Then his announcement is to be proclaimed on Sunday from the pulpit. Reception, however, should not follow until the next congregational meeting in order that the members of the congregation are given opportunity to see whether these people are going to hold to Word and Sacrament, and live a Christian life."<sup>16</sup> The cemetery was cleaned on a regular basis. The congregation also began to have Mission festivals on a regular basis. (A practice

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<sup>15</sup> Pastor Johann Meyer was probably not related to Slades Corners pastor J. J. Meyer in any close way. Pastor Johann Meyer was father of J. P. Meyer who was a beloved and long-time professor at the Seminary. Thus J. P. Meyer and Henry Gieschen were cousins.

<sup>16</sup> Wolff p. 31.

which still exists to this day). The young people in the congregation purchased new communion ware and the old ware was given to a poor congregation.

Pastor Gieschen served faithfully at St. Johns until 1891 when he accepted a call to serve in Flatville, Illinois. Pastor Gieschen went on to serve in Flatville for 8 years and then moved for health reasons<sup>17</sup> to congregations in Bristol and Paris, Wisconsin, for 2 years, Wonewoc, Wisconsin, for 6 years and Jerusalem Congregation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He also served in various Synodical secretarial roles for 50 years as well as a number of other boards, including the board for the WELS Indian Mission. He was a little over 60 years old when the Lord called him home to heaven.

The congregation at Slades Corners was sad to see Pastor Gieschen go. After extending calls to Pastor G. Saxmann and also a student, F. Upplegger, from Concordia Seminary at St. Louis the congregation remained without a pastor because those calls were returned.

#### **Rev. E. Schubarth 1891-1898**

Pastor Ernst F. Schubarth accepted the call to Slades Corners in 1891. He was an 1889 graduate of the Seminary and served as pastor at Randolph, Cambria and Fountain Prairie Wisconsin, until 1891 when he moved to Slades Corners.

In Feb 5<sup>th</sup> 1892 the congregation decided to build a new church. Members helped with the construction where they could, many used their wagons to bring materials to the site. The site chosen was next to the parsonage. By the first Sunday in Advent in the year 1892 the congregation entered the new building. They also purchased a pipe organ for \$525. Mr. Paul Sauer gave the greatest contribution of money to purchase it. The total cost of the new church was about \$5,000. This is the church building that is still used by the congregation today. The old

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<sup>17</sup> "In Memoriam: Henry Geischen" states that the southern climate didn't suit him very well, he had headaches and other pains, he moved north following advice from his doctor. This German document also has a long, glowing tribute to Geieschen written by his friend August Pieper.

church which had stood on the hill next to the cemetery was sold to a Mr. Baumann for \$100 and was moved by him to another site and converted into a dwelling. One can still see the foundations of the old church among the gravestones in the cemetery to this day.

On Oct 10, 1898 it was decided that Lake Geneva and Slades Corners should each have their own pastor and become independent of each other. Pastor Schubarth took over in Lake Geneva and Slades Corners called a new pastor. Pastor Schubarth continued serving at Lake Geneva only until 1899 when he resigned after a synodical investigation into his practices. The History of Walworth County reports that Pastor Schubarth with 12 families separated from that Lutheran congregation in Lake Geneva and built a new church and parsonage at Park Row and Warren street. This church had a basement that doubled as a parish schoolhouse. Pastor Schubarth's stay there was very short and probably after a vacancy a new man took over the pastorate there in 1902.<sup>18</sup> Pastor Schubarth later became a pastor of Ephrata Lutheran Church in Milwaukee in 1900 which was not part of the Wisconsin Synod. Later in 1908 the Wisconsin Synod reviewed Schubarth's case and reinstated him as a pastor in the <sup>5</sup>Synod. Thus Ephrata joined the Wisconsin Synod in 1908. Pastor Schubarth served faithfully and like at Slades Corners ably guided that congregation through a building project.

#### **Pastor P. Korn 1898-1902**

After Schubarth moved to Lake Geneva, Pastor Paul Emil Korn accepted the call to serve at Slades Corners in 1898. He had been born July 11, 1849 in Dresden, Saxony, Germany. He attended *Volkschule* and *Fuerstenschule* in preparation for the University. He participated in a military campaign of 1870-71, though he was not wounded, he became very sick and returned to his parent's home. When he had recovered he then trained in Theology at the University of

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<sup>18</sup> Beckworth, Albert Clayton. "History of Walworth County Wisconsin." B. F. Bowen & Company: Indianapolis, IN 1912. p. 337.

Leipzig. When he graduated he served as a private tutor during which time he also found opportunities to preach. In 1882 he and his family moved to Russia where he took a position at a school for a while. During a period of “Russianization” in 1887 he and his wife with 3 small children decided to move to America. He wandered around in various church affiliations until he found a home in the Wisconsin Synod. He worked for the Synod as a *Reiseprediger* or traveling missionary in Northern Michigan. One of the congregations he served was St. Paul’s in Escabana, Michigan from 1895 to 1896 and also during that time established a preaching station at Hyde, Michigan. His work in Michigan was strenuous and his health deteriorated, he accepted a call to Slades Corners and served there faithfully for 4 years. He is described as having a rather “reserved” nature.<sup>19</sup>

During Korn’s ministry at Slades Corners the rules and regulations and charter of the congregation were updated and added to. The constitution was reworded and accepted by the congregation. It was decided that pastor Korn also through the months of June, July and August should conduct school. Before this time, school was only held in the winter and was only for members of the confirmation class. Now children from non-members could attend the school for the fee of \$0.50 per month. Member’s children would pay \$0.50 per year for heating costs. Pastor Korn also organized special collections for various ministries. He organized a collection for a mission congregation in Rapid River, a special collection to help pay off the synodical debt and a house collection for the Synod’s “Indian Mission.”

The church also underwent some interior remodeling during these years for a cost of \$937.26. The debts for this remodeling were paid off the next year. Pastor Korn made an effort to gather the Lutherans in Genoa Junction into a congregation, but there were too few so they joined Slades Corners instead. (The other group of Lutherans in Genoa Junction that had in

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<sup>19</sup> *Gemeinde-Blatt* Issue of 1903.

previous years been served by the Slades Corners pastor beginning with Goldammer had joined together with a congregation in Hebron, Illinois before this time).

On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1902, Thanksgiving Day, Pastor Korn had the service in the morning, and in the afternoon visited the home of his member John Raduenz to celebrate his and his wife's silver anniversary. Pastor Korn had a heart attack there and died instantly. He was a little over 53 years old. He was buried in the cemetery of the Slades Corners congregation. His wife later exhumed his body from the cemetery during the ministry of Pastor Wolff and had him buried elsewhere.

#### **Robert F. F. Wolff 1902-1924**

Robert Frederick Ferdinand Wolff became the 10<sup>th</sup> Pastor of Slades Corners. He had been born February 3, 1874, in Milwaukee. He attended St. Marcus Parochial School in Milwaukee and was confirmed in 1887. At the age of 21 he entered Northwestern College and at the end of his junior year he enrolled at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Wauwatosa. While still a senior at the Seminary he was assigned an emergency call to Slades Corners, following the death of Pastor Korn. Due to the shortage of pastors at the time he was soon given a permanent call there and ordained on Jan 25, 1903. On Sept 9, 1903 Pastor Wolff married Miss Alma Krueger of Milwaukee. During their marriage they had 7 sons and 1 daughter, though 3 sons and the daughter preceded him in death.

He served faithfully for almost 23 years in Slades Corners which is the longest pastorate at St. Johns to this day. The congregation began having an English service at least once a month in the evening in 1903. The attendance at these was very low. In 1904 a special offering was gathered for a new building in Watertown and for paying off the synodical debt. The congregation celebrated its 50-year anniversary in 1908. For the occasion Pastor Wolff wrote a

50 year history of the congregation and spoke with a number of members who had been with the congregation from early on.

A number of improvements to the building and grounds occurred during Wolff's ministry. A fence was built around the cemetery. The parsonage was painted inside and out as well as the exterior of the church. Pastor Wolff was concerned about the appearance of the church so some "church sheds" were torn down that did not look very good or very uniform. In 1916 electricity was put into the church and parsonage. In September of 1916 during a lightning storm the steeple was struck by lightning and due to a faulty lightning rod, the bolt tore a hole two feet square through the clapboards and caused considerable damage to the ceiling of the church. Fortunately no fire started. The <sup>l</sup>Lightning <sup>r</sup>Rod company replaced the lightning rods at no cost to the congregation.

The congregational school was a high priority for Pastor Wolff. He writes in his 50 year history of the congregation " Much must still be done for the school, for especially the school is for the continuing existence of the congregation of greatest importance and meaning."<sup>20</sup> Pastor conducted school in the parsonage at first. Younger children came in the summer and confirmation age children came during the winter. In 1916 a small brick school building was built between the church and the parsonage. It was completed in 1917. Also in 1917 the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church building was celebrated. The current stained art-glass windows were installed in 1917 and painted by June 1 of that year. A half-acre of land was purchased by the congregation also at this time.

In 1917 the Ladies' Aid was organized and the present Cemetery Association was organized in 1923. It was resolved that anyone who moved away and joined another congregation would retain the privilege of his place of burial in the cemetery if he paid \$15 to the

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<sup>20</sup> Wolff. p.40.

congregation when he left. In 1922 a parking lot was made west of the church that still exists today. 14 members of the congregation served in the US military during WWI. Because of the anti-German sentiment in the country English had begun to replace German in the congregation by 1924.

After almost 23 years at Slades Corners, Pastor Wolff accepted a call to St. James Church in Cambridge. For 12 of his years at Cambridge he also served St. John's Church at Cold Springs. He died in the parsonage at Cambridge after suffering a prolonged and painful illness on November 12, 1939. His funeral service was held on November 15 in Cambridge. Pastor A. Wahl preached a German sermon and Pastor H.C. Nitz, grandfather of the current pastor at Slades Corners, preached the English sermon. H.C. Nitz also wrote Pastor Wolff's obituary for the Northwestern Lutheran. Pastor Sponholz held a memorial service for Pastor Wolf in Slades Corners.

#### **Pastor W. Huth 1924-1928**

After Pastor Wolff left in 1924, Pastor William Huth accepted the call to serve the Slades Corners congregation. He had been born in Milwaukee on March 24, 1892. He was confirmed by Dr. Adolph Hoenecke in 1906 and was married Aug 30, 1919. He had attended Northwestern for high school and college and trained at the <sup>S</sup>eminary in Wauwatosa where he graduated in 1919. He served Ellensburg, Washington, until 1920 and Wabeno, Wisconsin, until 1924 when he accepted the call to Slades Corners.

During Huth's ministry the Congregation's constitution was altered so that the pastor was no longer the president and secretary of the congregation. Members were elected to these offices for a term of 3 years. Highway 50 was built at this time. It became a main route from Kenosha to Lake Geneva and went right through Slades Corners until it was rerouted near the turn of the

century. While the road was constructed, it became difficult to reach the church and attendance dropped off for a time. Additional concrete was added to the church grounds for an entranceway and driveways at this time. Pastor Huth accepted a call to serve Bethany in Kenosha. Pastor E. Jaster of Bristol served as vacancy pastor at Slades Corners. During the vacancy the parsonage was completely renovated.

After serving at Bethany in Kenosha until 1930, Pastor Huth served a church in Colome, South Dakota until 1931 when his public ministry ended. He moved back to Milwaukee and lived there until 1937 and then moved back to his hometown of Polk, near Slinger in Washington County. He went home to his Lord at age 78 on July 17, 1970.

#### **Pastor E. Sponholz 1929 – 1942**

Pastor Edmund Sponholz was the next pastor to serve Slades Corners. He was the son of Emil Sponholz and was born in 1899 in Mequon. He was confirmed in 1913 at Trinity in Mequon. After a year at Northwestern College and having struggled with Greek, he changed his plan to enter the ministry and studied at Concordia in Springfield, Illinois. In June 1926, he was ordained at St. Marcus in Milwaukee and became pastor at St. Johns and Mount Olive in Mukwanago. In 1929 he accepted the call to Slades Corners where he served faithfully for 16 years.

During his ministry English services were held regularly with German services only on every second Sunday. A garage was added to the parsonage. Women and men began to have communion together, before this they had communed separately. The new *Lutheran Hymnal* was introduced. The church choir also did quite well. Pastor Sponholz probably enhanced the choir as he had been involved in music and band since his days at Northwestern. There was an active Young People's Society which started in 1930. A new furnace was installed after the old one



caused some damage after a fire. Communion rails and cushions were purchased and installed and book holders were installed on the pews.

Pastor Sponholz on one occasion, visited the sick wife of the man that ran the tavern in town. The bartender and his wife lived upstairs above the tavern. After he gave communion to the sick lady he went downstairs to talk to her husband. He did not have a drink but fell out of the front door as he left. The talk of the town for a short time was that perhaps the pastor fell because he drank too much.

During Sponholz's ministry there was a terrible labor strike over milk. Pastor Sponholz held a funeral service for a man who was killed in the strike. The strikers would blockade the milk trucks and tip them over. These milk strikes during the depression were quite serious. In September of 1932, St. Johns in Burlington suffered damage to their school and parsonage when someone bombed the milk transfer station across the street.

In October 1935, St. John's held its annual Mission Festival with services in the morning, afternoon and evening. The Seminary Chorus was scheduled to sing at the evening service, but a fire broke out at the Slade Farm. A large and small barn were destroyed in the fire. The Henry Kaddatz family had been renting this farm and it was not far west of the church. The members of the Seminary Chorus used buckets of water and other means to help save surrounding buildings and all the livestock. Then they had supper and sang for the service.

Pastor Sponholz was also active in Synod affairs. He served as German and recording secretary for the <sup>S</sup>southeastern Wisconsin <sup>D</sup>istrict and secretary of the <sup>S</sup>southern <sup>C</sup>onference as well as secretary of the mixed conference for the Milwaukee area.

Pastor Sponholz's ministry came to an abrupt end when the Lord took him home to heaven on Dec 22, 1942. He had a sudden and massive cerebral hemorrhage while preparing for

Christmas services. He is buried in the Mequon cemetery. He left behind his wife, Irma and 3 sons, Richard, Raymond and Martin. Martin Sponholz currently serves as professor at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota.

#### **Pastor A. Lorenz 1943-1954**

Pastor Albert Lorenz, a 1942 graduate of the Seminary became the next pastor at Slades Corners. During World War II 13 members of the congregation served with the Allies. During these years a number of improvements were made to the church building. A building fund was established in 1946 to take care of all improvements and repairs.

In 1947 Pastor Lorenz helped fill a teacher vacancy in the upper grades at St. John's in Burlington from Easter until the end of the school year. In June of 1947 Pastor Lorenz met with Lutherans in Pell Lake, Wisconsin, and helped them organize into a congregation. In January of 1955 that congregation decided to leave the Wisconsin Synod over the doctrine of Fellowship. Many from the congregation and the area were members of the Masonic lodge and wished to remain so. They were upset when they learned that the Wisconsin Synod was not in favor of lodge membership. The congregation decided to join the ULCA that same year.

The Slades Corners congregation celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation in October of 1948. A new organ was purchased and was installed in 1949. In 1952 the church was also completely renovated with new chancel furniture and appointments, including a new altar, lectern and pulpit. The church windows were also repaired and covered with protective glass. In 1953 it was decided that church officers and the president would be elected for 1-year terms. The monthly offering envelope system was replaced by a weekly envelope system. In 1954 Pastor Lorenz accepted a call to serve in Ontarioville, Illinois.

### D. H. Kuehl 1954 – 1958

Dietrich H. Kuehl accepted the call to Slades Corners in 1954. He had been born on a farm near Holte, Germany in 1917. He moved to America and settled on a farm near Selby, South Dakota. He received his High School diploma from <sup>Northwestern Lutheran</sup> Mebridge Academy in South Dakota in 1936. He graduated from Northwestern College in 1940 and the <sup>S</sup>eminary in 1943. After serving congregations in Clear Lake and Altamount, South Dakota, and McMillan and March Rapids, Wisconsin, he accepted the call to Slades Corners.

During Kuehl's ministry there were a number of changes to St. John's facilities. In 1955 the congregation installed chimes. In 1956 they tore down the small brick school that had been built in 1917. It no longer served its purposes and in its place they built the current parish hall to help with the instruction of the young. Much labor was donated by members and the total cost with furnishings was \$46,000. In 1957 the congregation also voted to remodel the parsonage.

Sunday School enrollment reached 150 in 1958 and a nursery class was added. Lutheran Pioneers (Train number 37) and Lutheran Girl Pioneers (Caravan number 15) were also organized in 1958. The Pioneer program had been invented and developed by their sister congregation in Burlington. The purpose was to provide youth with a Christ-centered program instead of the Scouts which was established by Lutherans, developed by Lutherans and led by Lutherans. In 1955 Pastor Kuehl organized the Men's Club which had 40 members in 1958. In 1955 the congregation decided to have 2 Sunday morning services at 8 and 10 am. An Adult Bible Hour was also begun. During the centennial anniversary year a house-to-house stewardship campaign was completed. Centennial services were held on Sundays in October, 1958. In August of 1958 Pastor Kuehl accepted a call to Lake Mills, Wisconsin, but offered to stay on at Slades Corners until the centennial celebration was completed.

Pastor Kuehl went on to serve in Lake Mills and then in Hartford, Wisconsin. He went home to heaven on October 30, 1989 at the age of 72. He had also served the synod in a number of capacities. In the Western Wisconsin District he served on the mission board and was circuit pastor of the central <sup>C</sup> conference. He also served the Southeastern Wisconsin <sup>D</sup> district as second vice president and was circuit pastor of the Dodge Washington Conference and a member of the district mission board. He also served on the board of Directors of Northwestern Publishing House.

#### **Pastor Norman Barenz 1959 –1964**

Pastor Norman Barenz was the next pastor to serve Slades Corners. He was born in Cedarburg, Wisconsin in 1925. He graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1950 and was pastor at St. Paul's in Livingston Montana before accepting the call to Slades Corners.

Pastor Barenz' ministry was characterized by zeal for spiritual improvement. The congregation tried to start a Christian Day School in the parish hall but unfortunately the attempt was unsuccessful. Instead they established a Christian education fund to aid in paying for tuition to a parochial school. In 1961 the congregation approved an increase in council members from 6 to 8. In December of 1961 Pastor Barenz preached the sermon in Burlington as they laid the cornerstone for their new church building. During Barenz' ministry the congregation began to publish giving records by account number instead of by name. This was a welcome change, as the reports too easily could become the subject of gossip in the congregation. To improve church education Pastor Barenz decided to teach a four-year program for confirmation instruction. He also launched an extensive stewardship program with a booklet and an every member visit. During these years an active Men's Club enjoyed dart ball and spiritual discussions. Funds for a new organ, a new sound system and a new furnace for the parsonage were set up. Slades Corners

joined other WELS congregations in purchasing part interest in a private campground called Camp Oak Ridge at Palmyra, Wisconsin.

A number of negative things also happened during these years. A dangerous furnace explosion occurred that involved extensive cleanup and repainting in the church. Bees invaded the attic and had to be exterminated. Pastor Barenz also guided the congregation through the painful split between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. The church steeple also had to be repaired and repainted.

In 1964 Pastor Barenz accepted a call to Zion, Illinois. He went on to serve congregations in Hartland, Wisconsin, and Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. He moved back to Hartland, Wisconsin, where he went home to heaven in 2006.

#### **Pastor E. Weiss 1964-1964**

In January of 1964 Pastor Edward Weiss, a 1940 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, accepted the call to serve Slades Corners. He visited the congregation and made plans to move but he suffered a sudden heart attack and was unable to come and fulfill the call. The congregation remained without a pastor.

#### **Pastor Adelbert Hellmann 1964 – 1973**

Pastor Adelbert Hellmann accepted the call to St. Johns in 1964. He had been born Oct 3, 1907 in Nicollet, MN. After he graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1933 he served congregations in southeastern Colorado, Mound City and Goodwin, South Dakota. He then served in Peshtigo and in Rock Springs, Wisconsin, and then came to Slades Corners in 1964.

During the vacancy the congregation had been bequeathed an estate of Herman Pochnick, valued at \$80,805 plus the house. His sister, Mary died in 1965 and her estate of \$60,684 was also willed to St. Johns. These funds were used to further mission work through the Church

Extension Fund, to set up an education fund for training of pastors and loans to the synod's training schools. The congregation also used the money to blacktop the parking lot, build a new parsonage in 1967, to build a new fence, roads and a wall at the cemetery and to do extensive church remodeling in 1968. This remodeling included new walls and ceilings, new padded pews, a new glass partition wall, new carpeting and a new electric organ.

In 1964 vandals twice burglarized the church office and on one occasion stole the offering money. In 1965 the steeple cross was replaced with an 8-foot lighted cross. In 1965 Pastor Hellmann's wife went home to heaven. In 1966 St. John's joined with neighboring congregations in sponsoring "the Lutheran Chapel of the Air" on the WMIR radio station. Loren Karow bought and removed the old parsonage for \$752 and Erwin Seno bought the Pochnick house for \$12,000. William Ziebell and Robert Hellmann received scholarships while training for the ministry. Both became "sons of the congregation." In 1968 a special collection for synod was taken through the Missio Dei program enabling the synod to continue <sup>to</sup> and expand its facilities and services. In 1972 the congregation decided that 18-year-old men could become voting members.

Pastor Hellmann is described as a biblical scholar and his expertise benefited both the Slades Corners congregation and the Southern Pastoral Conference. On November 1, 1973 Pastor Hellmann announced his retirement. He went home to heaven on February 17, 1991 in New Ulm, Minnesota.

#### **Pastor R. E. Ziebell 1974-1987**

Pastor Raymond E. Ziebell accepted the call to Slades Corners in 1974. He was born May 4, 1937 at La Crosse, WI. He attended the La Crosse public schools and graduated from Logan High in 1955. He then attended the College of Commerce in La Crosse, worked as a stockroom

manager and also joined the Army reserve and served 6 months active duty. He later entered Northwestern College at Watertown and began preparation for the ministry. He graduated from there in 1965 and after training at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary he graduated from there in 1969. He was married in 1967 to Bernice Schnick of Milwaukee. He first served a dual parish in Henry and Grover, South Dakota. In May of 1974 he was installed at Slades Corners.

During Pastor Ziebell's ministry the congregation celebrated the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wisconsin Synod. In 1983 the congregation took part in the program "Reaching Out" which was accomplished through an "every member visit." The Boy <sup>P</sup>pioneer and <sup>B</sup>buckaroo groups were reorganized as well as the Young People's Society and the Choir. Pastor Ziebell who was musically gifted led the church choir. The congregation supported the Lutheran Home in Belle Plaine, Shoreland Lutheran High School and Wisconsin Lutheran College. Some new members joined the congregation through the "Talk about the Savior" evangelism program. In 1977 the congregation experimented with the service times and went to 2 services but by 1979 the congregation went to one service year round at 9 am.

In 1986 individual communion cups were introduced and offered to communicants. Lay members also began assisting in the distribution of communion at this time. In 1987 Pastor Ziebell accepted a call to Calvary in Milwaukee.

#### **Pastor Daniel M. Nitz 1987- Present**

In 1987 Pastor Daniel Nitz accepted the call to Slades Corners. He was born December 25<sup>m</sup>, 1950. He attended High School at Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm, MN and college at Northwestern in Watertown. He graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1977 and was assigned to serve congregations at Sutton and Aurora, Nebraska. He then took a call to Grand

Rapids, Minnesota where he served until 1987 when he accepted the call to Slades Corners and was installed on September 6.

During his ministry new paraments for the chancel were purchased in 1988. A pictorial directory was completed in 1989. The congregation joined the Shoreland Lutheran High School Association in 1990. In 1992 the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building was celebrated. The new hymnal *Christan Worship* was introduced and used in the congregation's worship life. A carillon and sound system were dedicated in 1996. In 1998 the play ground across from the parking lot was extensively updated and remodeled by the youth group and became a pleasant area for both congregation members and children from the community. A parcel of land was donated to the church property by member George Grenus in 1999. The 1950's style bathrooms in the church building were remodeled and updated in 2000. An outdoor patio was set up between the church and parish hall in 2001. In 2002 a small metal pole-barn and land near the playground was donated to the congregation by Wayne Kaddatz. The congregation installed an eternal light in the sanctuary in memory of Willard Madaus. In 2005, after discussing it for many years, air conditioning was installed in the church building and parish hall.

A number of interesting things have happened so far during Pastor Nitz's ministry at Slades Corners. On one occasion, members were startled by a loud noise when the large clapper fell out of the bell and thudded to the ground. Fortunately no person or property was damaged. On another occasion fire endangered the 100 year-old church building when a semi truck caught fire on Highway 50 and pulled over in front of the church. Pastor Nitz and local members armed with hoses kept the building and stained glass windows wet and cool. No damage was done.

During Pastor Nitz's ministry Highway 50 was changed into a 4-lane highway and rerouted north of Slades Corners. This made the church much less visible to those passing by. In



2007, Pat Lamp, a member of the congregation with help from his family painted a large unique mural on the back of the fellowship hall which is visible from Highway 50. It is a rendition of God's finger reaching out to Adam's from Michelangelo's Sistene Chapel. Above the mural are the words "God so loved the World...John 3:16" The mural attracted the attention of the Kenosha News.

In January of 2008 tornados ripped through portions of Wheatland and damaged several homes including some homes of St. John's members. The church buildings were used as a relief center during the emergency.

The congregation celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary with various special services and speakers all through 2008. In October they celebrated with a special service after which visitors and members were treated to a large pig roast. Members of the congregation gathered together antiques and put together a display of various historical items from over the centuries. Pastor and many members let their beards grow and dressed in 1800s period costumes for the occasion. Pastor William Ziebell, a son of the congregation preached the sermon. A booklet was produced by retired Pastor Tom Krause, a member of the congregation, to commemorate the 150 year-history of the congregation.

### **Concluding Remarks**

From small beginnings come great things. From a few Lutheran families gathered in 1858 to a congregation that has lasted 150 years and has been served by 18 different pastors. Slades Corners may not look like much to most of the world, but here God has done great things. G. Rosenhauer could not have known in 1858 that his little gathering of Lutherans in Slades Corners would provide impetus and support for a number of Lutheran congregations in the surrounding area. From the group that first started coming to Rosenhauer's services in Slades

Corners a large Lutheran congregation in Burlington would find its beginnings. Slades Corners provided pastors and support for congregations in Wilmot, Lake Geneva, Elkhorn, Genoa City and Pell Lake.

Slades Corners is still a place for sinners to come to know their Savior as he comes to them in Word and Sacrament. In the booklet that celebrates the 100-year anniversary of St. John's church building, Pastor Nitz writes,

We can see the purpose of this church by looking at the steeple. The steeple sets this building apart from other buildings...the spire directs us heavenward reminding us that our goal as Christians is eternal life in heaven. On top of the steeple is the cross reminding us that the cross of Jesus is our way to heaven. The cross on our steeple is a lighted cross at night. That too is significant. Its light shines forth in the blackness of the night as the rays of the Gospel shine forth from the pages of Holy Writ piercing the blackness of sin and unbelief in our world. Someone once related an incident that apparently occurred a number of years ago during the winter. Someone driving south on highway "P" became lost in a blinding snowstorm unable to see in any direction and not knowing where to go to find help, warmth, shelter from the elements. Suddenly he spotted the lighted cross on our steeple. Keeping his eyes focused on that cross he soon was led to the shelter he so desired. Isn't that a commentary and illustration of life. When a person is lost in sin and unbelief, groping for meaning in life, buffeted by life's storms, the Holy Spirit shines rays of the Gospel forth from the Word of God we Christians share and that lost soul is brought to eternal security.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed the true history of the congregation at Slades Corners is really the history of its people. God's people, young and old, gathered around the <sup>u</sup>Means of <sup>g</sup>Grace. God's saved people, living their Christian lives as they let their light shine in a dark world. God knows this history in a way that cannot be recorded. He rejoices at the sinners who here have been brought to repentance. He rejoices at all who here have had their sins washed in the waters of Holy Baptism and who have here received Christ's true body and blood in the Lord's Supper. The world may see only a small rural congregation. God sees precious blood-bought souls working in his great harvest. No matter what earthly future may be in store for the Slades Corners congregation, they

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<sup>21</sup> Lifting High the Cross for 100 Years 1892-1992

may eagerly look forward to the day when Christ will come again and all Christians will be united from every age, nation and race to celebrate the eternal victory of Christ in paradise.

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## Pastoral Acts at St. John's Slades Corners from 1858 - 2007

Baptisms: 2005

Confirmations: 1372

Weddings: 482

Funerals: 717

Current Communicants: 262

Current Souls: 328

### List of Pastors Who Served the Congregation

C.F. Goldammer (1858-1862)

C. Titze (1863-1866)

W. Stoerkel (1867-1868)

J.J.E. Sauer (1869-1873)

J.J. Meyer (1873-1876)

C.F. Goldammer (1876-1885)

Aug. F. Graebner (1885-1887)

Henry Gieschen (1888-1891)

E. Schurbarth (1891 – 1898)

P. Korn (1899 – 1902)

Robert. F. F. Wolff (1902 – 1924)

W. Huth (1924 – 1928)

E. Sponholz (1929 – 1942)

A. Lorenz (1943 – 1954)

D. H. Kuehl (1954 – 1958)

Norman Berenz (1959 – 1964)

E. Weiss (accepted call but did not serve) (1964- 1964)

Adelbert Hellmann (1964-1973)

R.E. Ziebell (1974 – 1987)

Daniel Nitz (1987 – present)



**C.F. GOLDAMMER**  
1858-1862  
1876-1885



**C. TITZE**  
1863-1866



**W. STOERKEL**  
1867-1868



**J.J.E. SAUER**  
1869-1873



**J.J. MEYER**  
1873-1876



**A.F. GRAEBNER**  
1885-1887



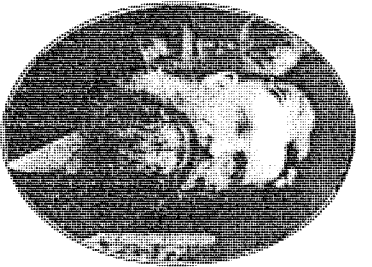
**H. GIESCHEN**  
1888-1891



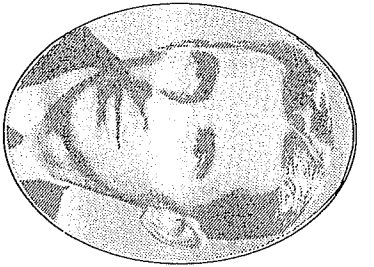
**E. SCHUBARTH**  
1891-1898



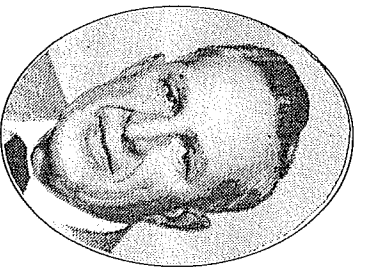
Schubarth  
1891-1898



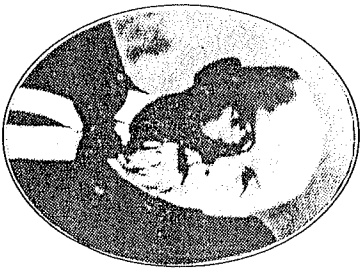
Korn  
1898-1902



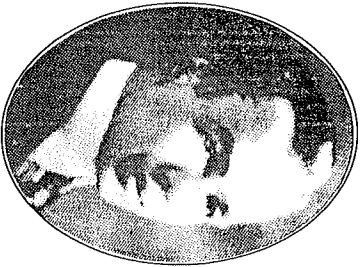
Kuehl  
1954-1958



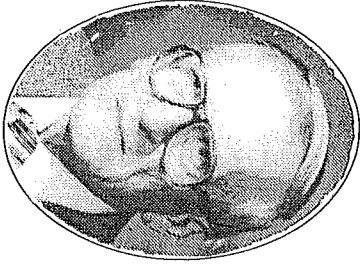
Barenz  
1959-1964



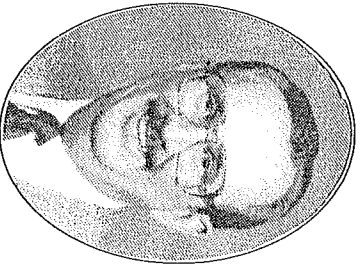
Wolf  
1902-1924



Huth  
1924-1928



Hellmann  
1964-1973



Ziebell  
1974-1988



Sponholz  
1929-1942



Lorenz  
1943-1954



Above: William Ziebell - Son of the Corporation



Right: Pastor Daniel Nitz  
1987 - Present

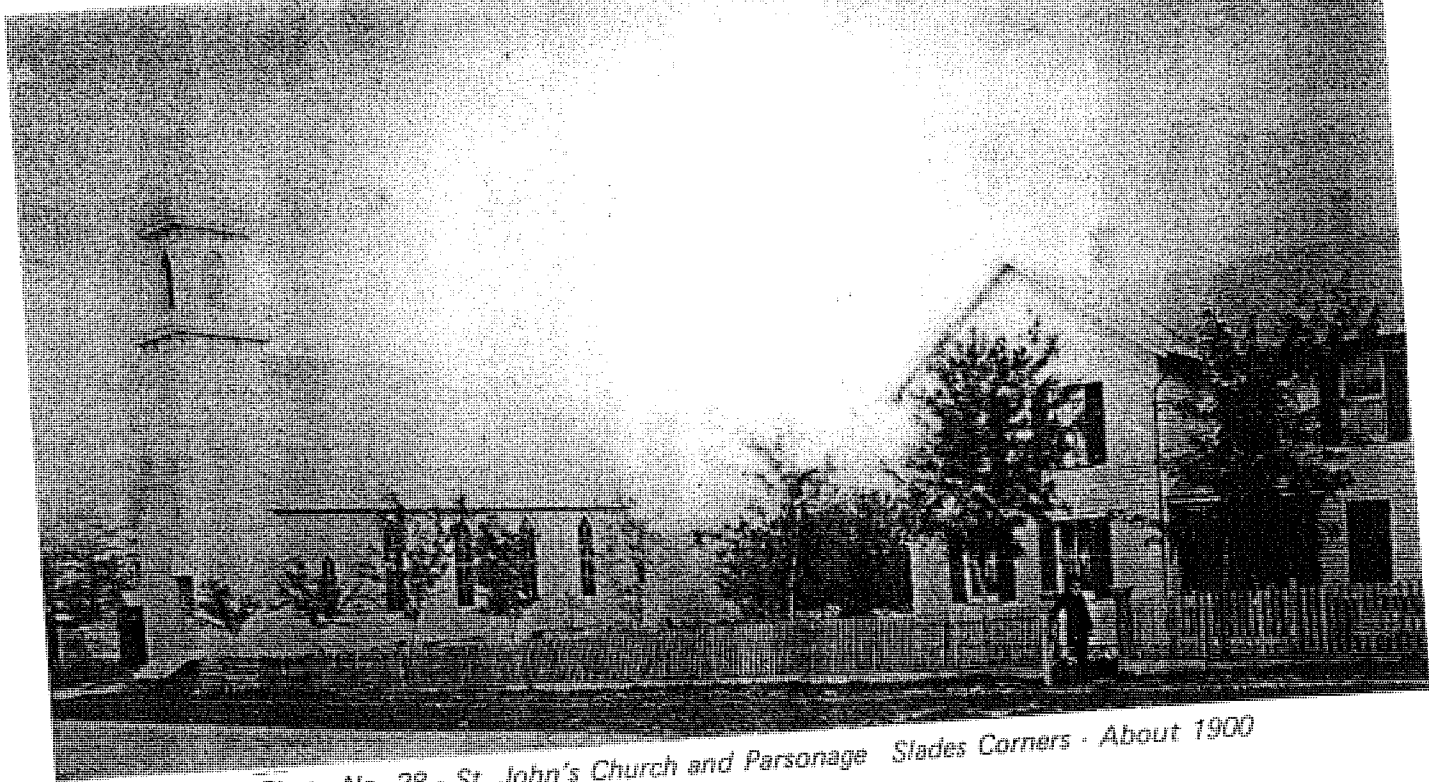


Photo No. 28 - St. John's Church and Parsonage Slades Corners - About 1900

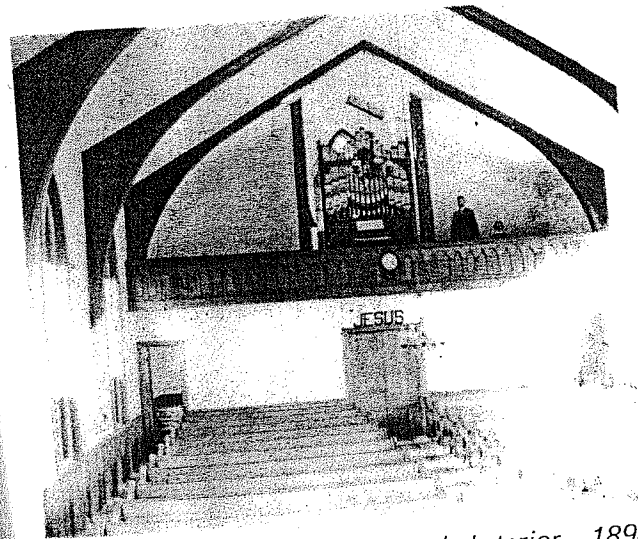


Photo No. 29 - St. John's Church Interior - 1894

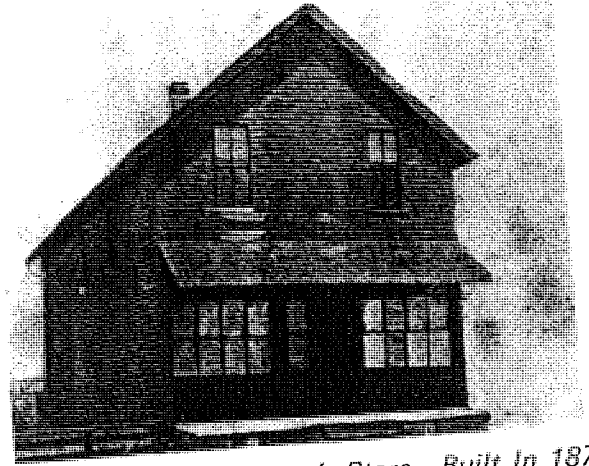
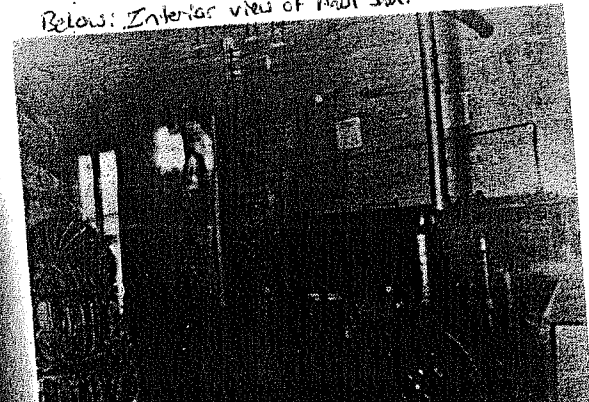


Photo No. 30 - Paul Sauer's Store - Built In 1874

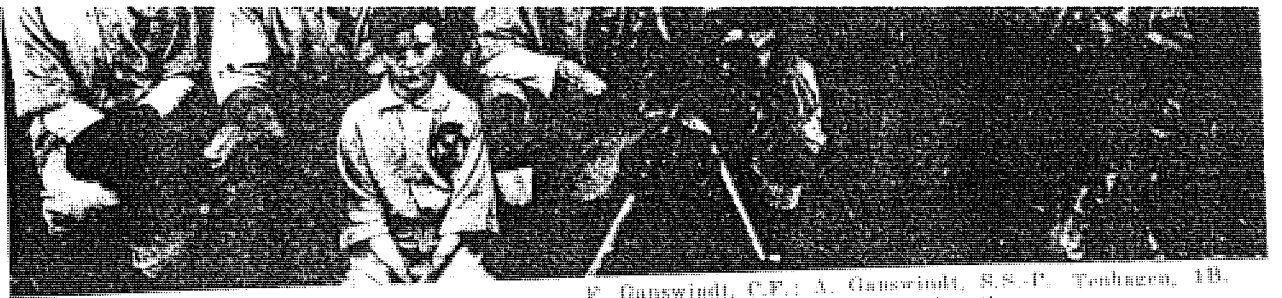
Below: Interior view of Paul Sauer's store



Below: Paul Sauer's New store

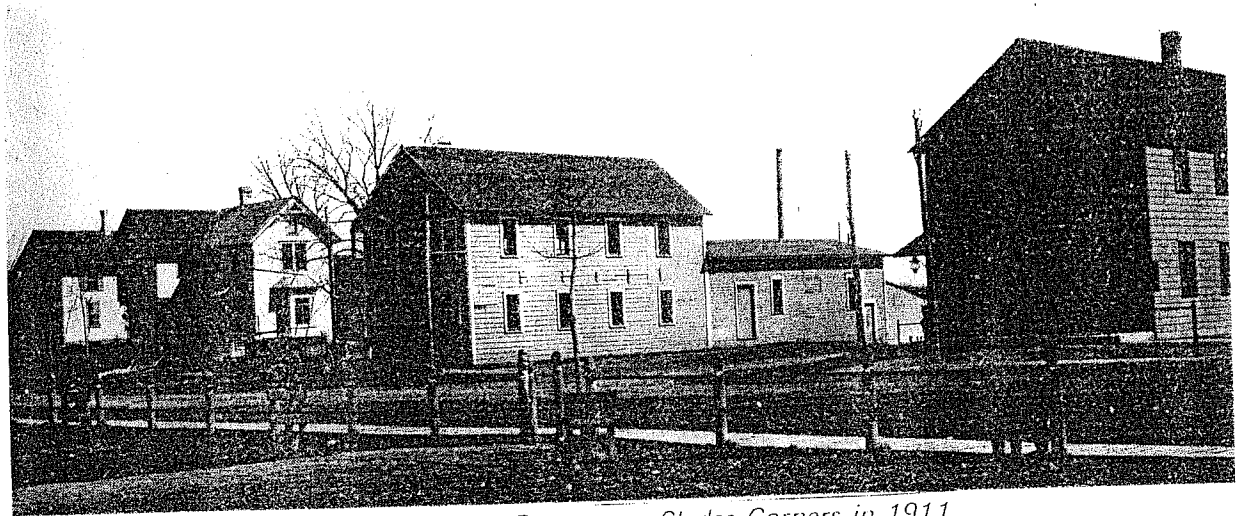




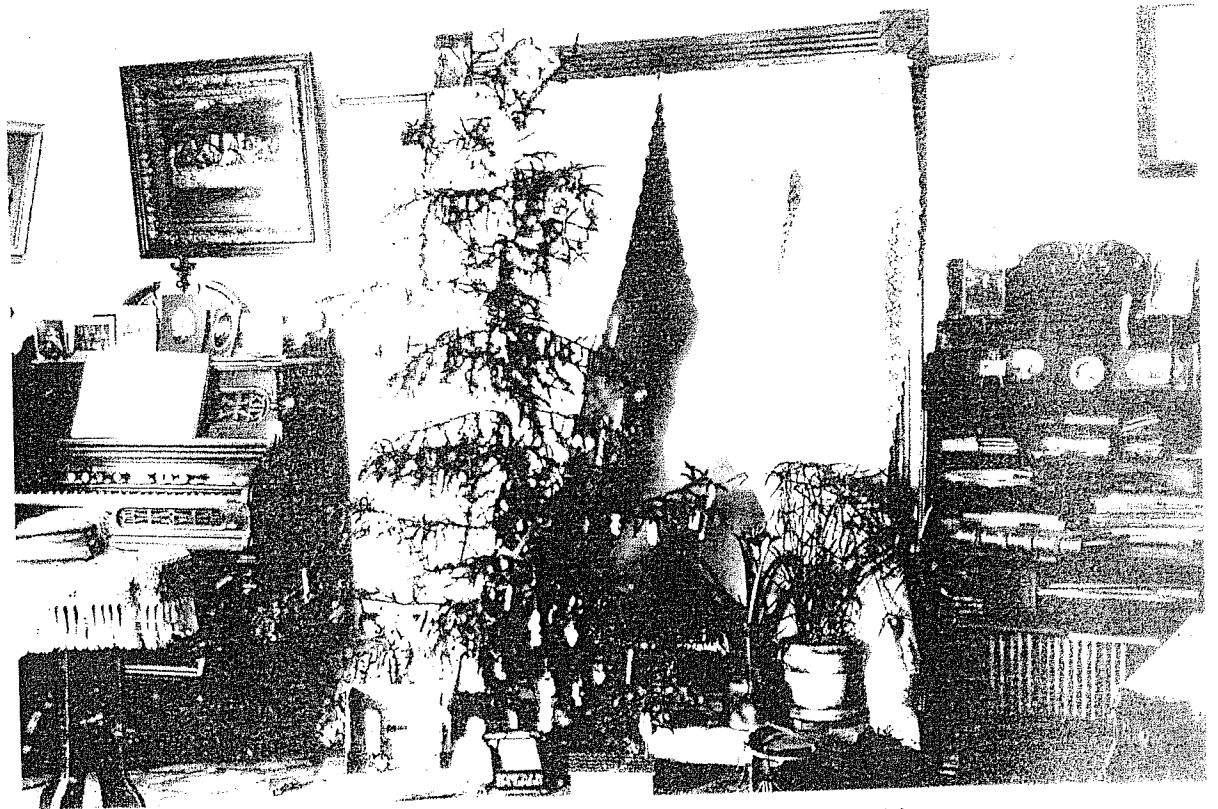


F. Gauswirth, C.F.; A. Gauswirth, S.S.-P.; Tenhagen, 1B.  
 F. Schaal, 3B.; Kessler, R.F.; Lemmerhirt, C.; Vollbrecht, Scorer.  
 Neuman, L.F.; E. Schaal, P.; Meinke, Mascot; Sauer, Mgr.; Schwanz, 2B.;

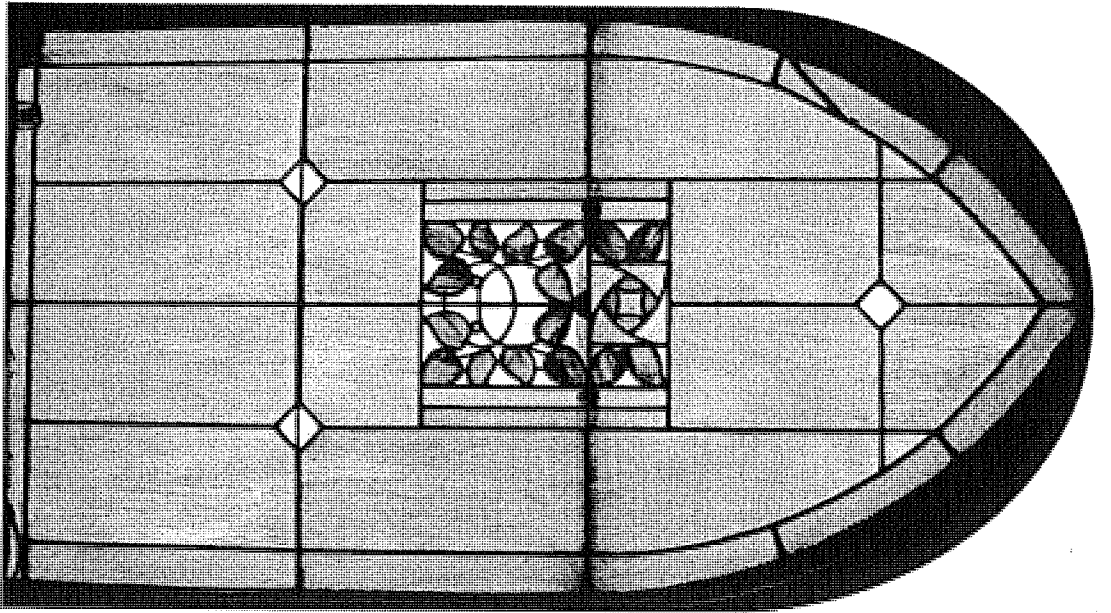
*Photo No. 33 - Slades Corners Cubs Baseball Team 1911*



*Photo No. 34 - Downtown Slades Corners in 1911*

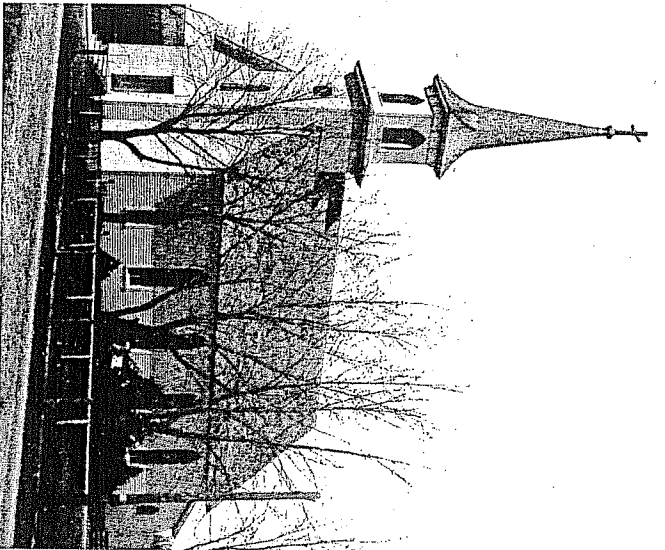


*Photo No. 35 - Paul Sauer's Parlor - About 1890*

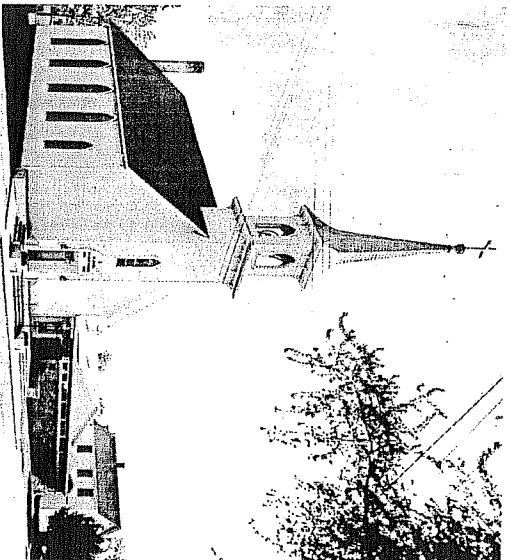


#15 SACRISTY

-28-



BUILT IN 1892 - PHOTO TAKEN 1908



1958

-29-

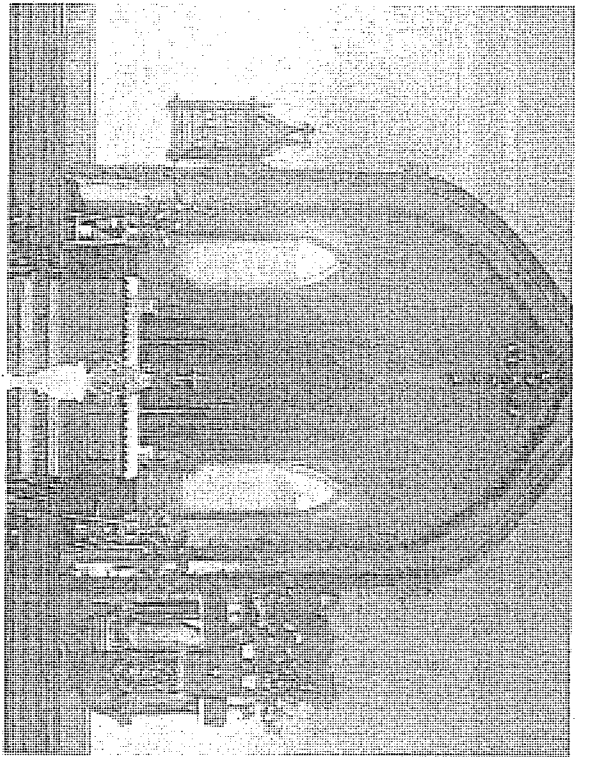


PHOTO TAKEN IN 1908 - INTERIOR REMODELED IN 1917

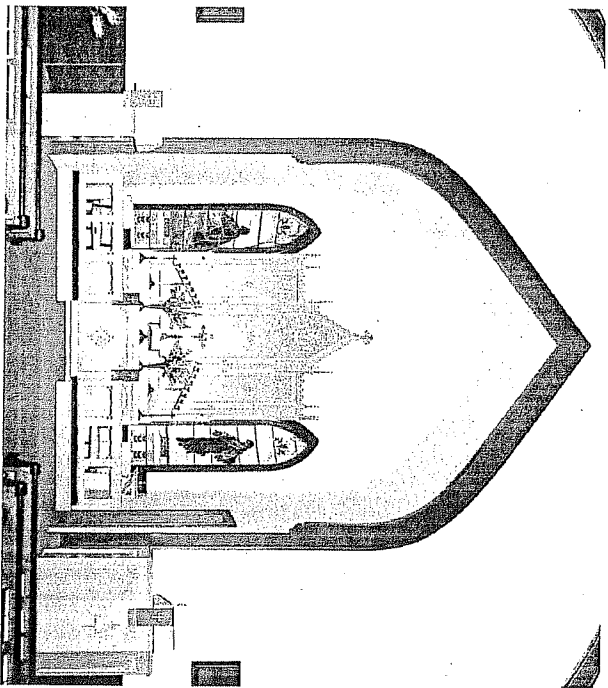
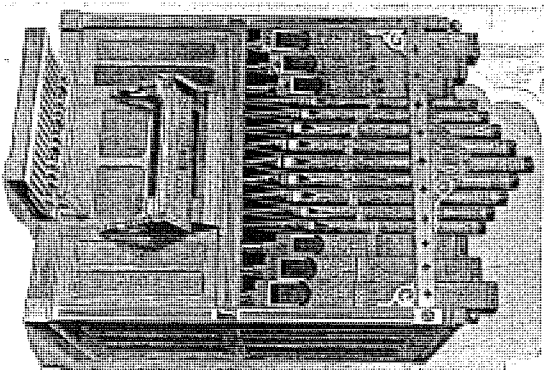
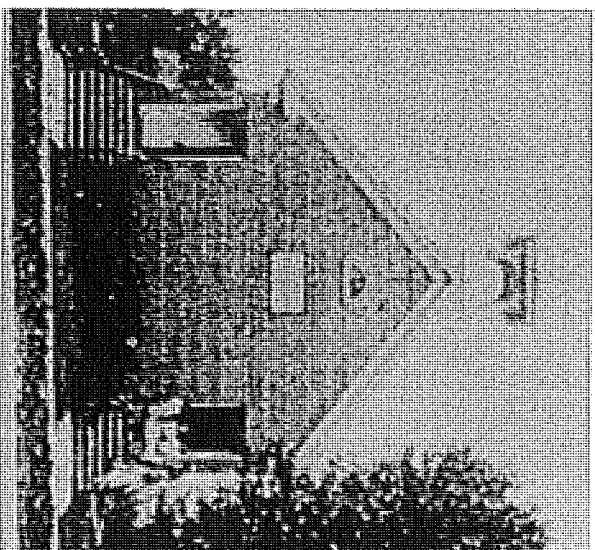


PHOTO TAKEN BEFORE MID 1960'S

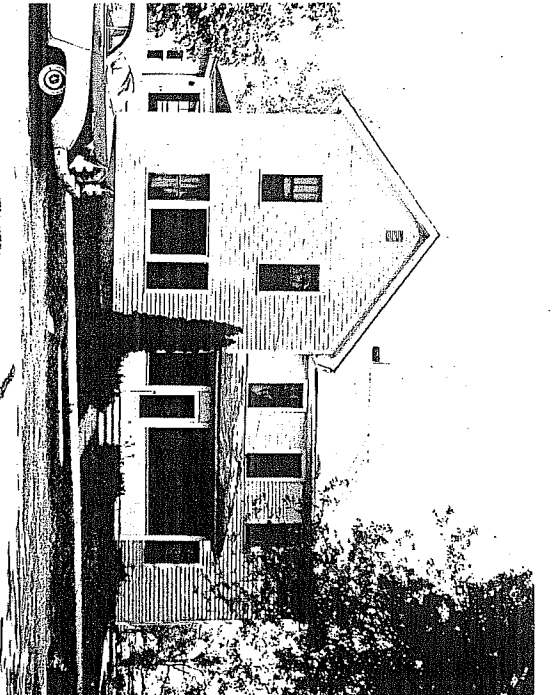


FIRST PIPE ORGAN AND PAUL SAUER - FIRST ORGANIST

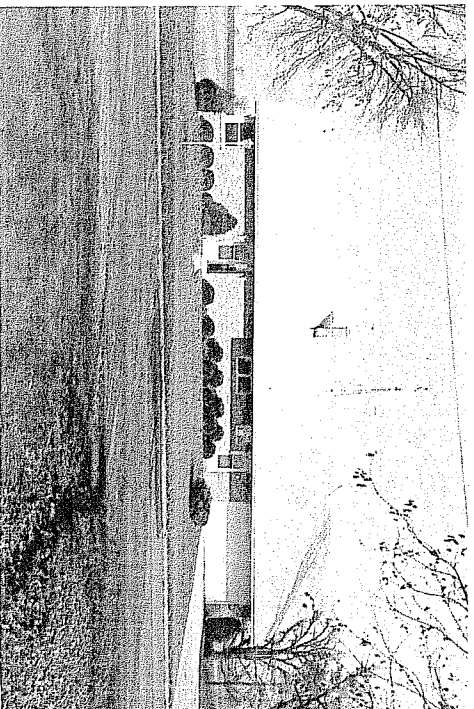


ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL BUILT IN 1917

NOTES



**OLD PARSONAGE**  
(Remodeled in 1890, 1928, 1957)



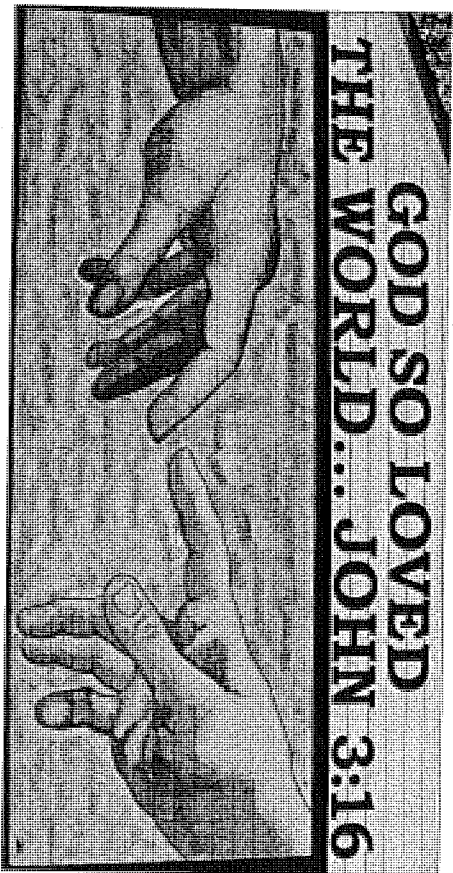
**PRESENT PARSONAGE**  
(Built in 1967)

**BOOKLET COMMITTEE**

Judith Bode  
Earl Floeter  
Wanda ...  
Carol Kerkman  
Patricia Kjellander  
Lillian ...



Not Easter Breakfast! Sunday School in session 1958 - 150 enrolled



MURAL PAINTED ON PARISH HALL 2007

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church  
Slades Corners  
39506 60<sup>th</sup> Street  
Burlington, WI 53105