

WHY SO LARGE ?

(A Study of Important Factors which had an Effect
on Trinity Lutheran Church's Growth, ^(Waukesha, WI) focusing
especially on the years 1886-1930)

by

Robert L Noldan III

For

Prof E. Friedrich (Senior History)

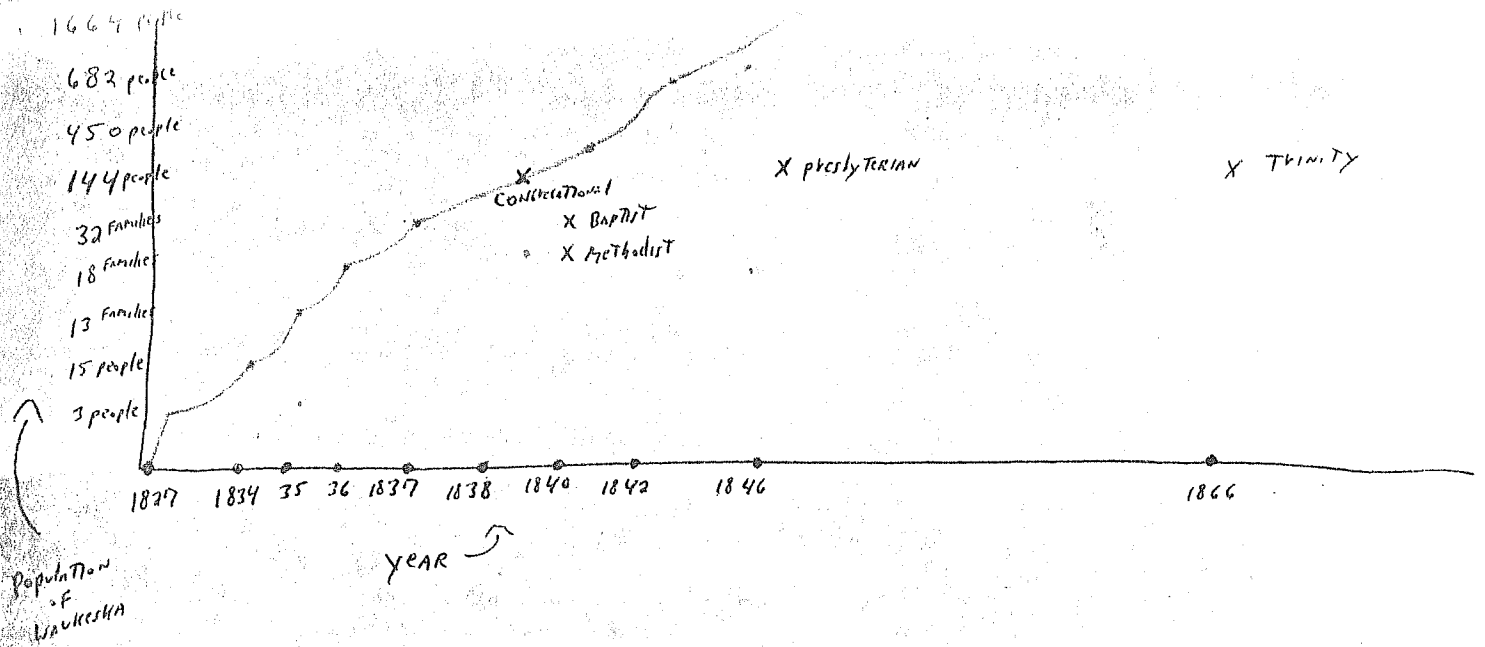
1980

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When someone mentions the word "Waukesha", much history comes to mind. The city is full of many historical reminders of its past. We think of the spring health resorts which made Waukesha so famous. We can't forget the presence of the well known depot. Who can forget the beauty and largeness of Carroll College, or the crooked Indian paths that eventually became streets, such as the "Five Points"? In this city there is yet another historical site; not only rich in history in the past, but making history even now. I am speaking of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.

My interest in Trinity has increased throughout the years. One thing that has intrigued me in my years being a member, has been this question: why is Trinity as large as it is? What has caused Trinity to be so large in size? Of course, we all know what part God's grace plays in this matter. We are what we are, as a result of God working. Whatever success we may find in the ministry, all the credit belongs to God. To Him belongs all the glory. We know this. But my purpose in writing this paper is to find the more underlying reasons for the present state of Trinity.

What factors have played into Trinity's size today? What in the history of the church, has caused Trinity to become a large congregation? One reason for its size is the fact that Trinity was one of the first churches in Waukesha. Waukesha was first settled in 1827 by nine people. Another group of settlers came seven years later in 1834. From that year on settlers came quite regularly every year. By 1838 there were 144 people in Waukesha, then called Prairieville. It was during this year the historic Congregational Church was begun. Soon after, in the year 1839, two more churches were founded: the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church. It wasn't until seven years later that a Presbyterian Church was built. Thus the picture looked like this:



As the population of the city increased, the founding of new churches increased too. Trinity Lutheran church became the fifth church in the city. It was organized in 1886, fifty nine years after Waukesha was settled. By 1892 the number of churches increased to nine. Meanwhile the population of the city increased to 6425. As new people came to Waukesha, the need for new churches became great.

Because Trinity was founded early in the history of the city, it had time to establish itself in the community, become well known and grow in size before many other churches. Being one of the earlier churches had much to do with its condition today.

We know however, that the date of founding isn't the only reason for its size today. Trinity is approaching its centennial year. During the course of those one hundred years, the church could have lost members and gone into oblivion. Why didn't it? God's grace was at work! Not only was Trinity one of the earliest churches in Waukesha, it became known as the Lutheran church in Waukesha! The following paragraphs are translated from the German of the church's first book of minutes and tell us how the church was founded:

In September, 1886, the Rev. Johannes H. Brockman, then pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran church in Watertown, was taking the train from Burlington, Wisconsin, to his home. He planned to transfer from the

500 Line to the St. Paul at Waukesha, but he missed a connection. He had to wait four hours for the next train, and he passed the time strolling the streets of our town, then an up and coming village. Somewhere near the river points he struck up a conversation with a local resident, a woman whose name has not been recorded. She was a Lutheran from Germany, and she told of her disappointment at not finding a Lutheran church here. When she learned that the stranger was a Lutheran pastor, she asked if he could bring about the founding of a Lutheran church here.

Pastor Brockman was an ardent supporter of mission work, and he immediately began an investigation of the possibilities. Satisfied that response would be favorable, he announced the beginning of services.

It was only natural that Trinity became known as the Lutheran church in Waukesha because Trinity was the first Lutheran church in Waukesha. In fact, there was not a Lutheran church outside our synod in Waukesha until the middle 1950's. Just imagine: Trinity was the only Lutheran church in town, (beside Grace Lutheran, a sister congregation founded in 1909) from its founding in 1886 until 1953. For a long, long time Trinity was known as the German Lutheran church to the people in Waukesha. In this century, Trinity congregation has been known affectionately to members and non-members alike as the White Rock Church. Being the chief Lutheran church in town for so many years served to Trinity's advantage. When people wished to join a Lutheran church, Trinity was the only one they could join. I suppose people could have started another church if they had wished, but the church served them and they were satisfied with the instruction and care given them.

It was mentioned that Grace Lutheran church was started in 1909. Notice though, from the years 1886 to 1909, Trinity existed all by itself without any other Lutheran churches. During this same period of time, the city of Waukesha's increased from 2,969 to 8740. Undoubtedly many of these same people became members on White Rock Avenue. By the time Grace was started, Trinity had a firm membership. In 1886 Trinity had 22 families. By 1902 Trinity increased to 100 families.

Furthermore, Trinity was a German church. Most of the people who belonged to the church spoke German too. When Grace was started, there were a few English-speaking

people who wanted an English-speaking church as a result, Grace was started. But very few people from Trinity left to join Grace because German was the language of that day. The people that came over from Germany stayed with their native tongue; there was no reason to change their language nor to switch their church membership.

Here is a source that tells us of a German-speaking member's view about English services :

I just received news that some people want to have services in English and teach their children in English. Where did they get such foolish ideas in their heads? I love the German and refuse anything else. This is nonsense and I will have no part of it! Nor will my children!

Trinity was considered the Lutheran church in Waukesha; German language and all!

Should there be much emphasis on German immigration as being responsible for much of Trinity's size? The German people had a lot to do with increasing the size of the congregation. Perhaps, this factor should be viewed as the most important of all. Since German immigrants lived in Waukesha, it was natural for them to join a German Lutheran church.

Soon after Trinity's founding, immigration from Europe to the year 1920, was at an all time high. Many of these foreigners moved to Wisconsin. Look at the population statistics of Wisconsin:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Increase over 1936</u>
1836	11683	-----
1840	30945	164 %
1846	155277	1229 %
1850	305390	2514 %

Notice how the population of the state increased in size! The population growth in Wisconsin during these years was amazing! That was not all, during the Wisconsin immigration movement from 1850 - 1920, Germany lead all countries. This graph looks like this:

	<u>1850</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>
1.	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany
2.	Ireland	Ireland	Ireland	NORWAY	NORWAY	NORWAY	NORWAY
	<u>1920</u>						
1.	Germany						
2.	Ireland						

Did you note the dominance of the German population throughout the entire period?

In order to further show the strength of the German factor that moved to Wisconsin, look at the following table.³ In 1850 foreign born comprised 36 % of the population, of these 38,064 or 11 % were Germans. By 1885 there were 265,756 German born residents in Wisconsin; this figure reflects 17 % of the entire population of the state and nearly 54 % of all foreigners in the state.

<u>census</u>	<u>German born</u>	<u>% of state</u>	<u>% of foreign born in state</u>
1850	38,064	11.3	32.4
1860	123,879	15.9	44.7
1870	162,314	15.4	45.0
1880	184,328	14.0	45.0
1885	<u>265,756</u>	<u>17.0</u>	<u>53.8</u>

Even by 1920, the German element remained strong. About one third of the foreign born (151,200) were born in Germany. The following chart depicts the strength of foreign immigration from 1850 to 1920.⁴ One will notice the decline of foreign born as the years go by, yet despite the decrease, Germans remained strong in influence and number.

<u>year</u>	<u>native born</u>	<u>foreign born</u>
1850	63.8	36.2
1860	65.3	35.7
1870	65.4	34.6
1880	69.2	30.8

<u>year</u>	<u>native born</u>	<u>foreign born</u>
1890	69.3	30.7
1900	75.1	24.9
1910	82.5	17.5

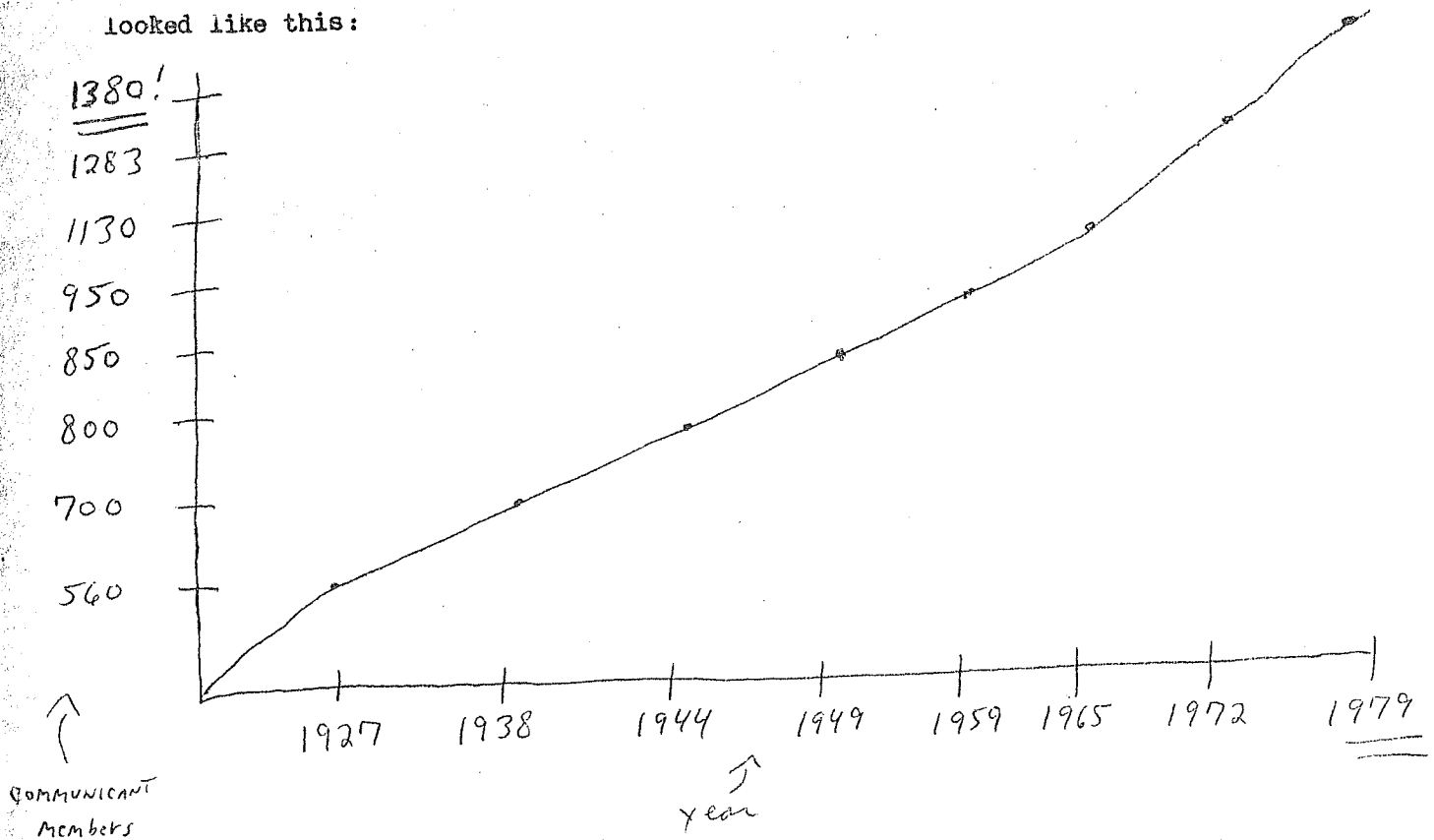
the Germanic influence can be expressed in another way. There were 712,941 persons of foreign white stock in Wisconsin in 1920 accredited as Germans. Persons of foreign white stock means white persons who were born abroad or whose parent (s) were born abroad. For persons whose country of origin in this sense is Germany, these are the facts:

- 1) Germany is the country of origin of 712,941 which is half of the total foreign white stock in 1920 (1,562,244).
- 2) Native Americans now in Wisconsin numbered 531,619 and had either or both parents born in Germany.

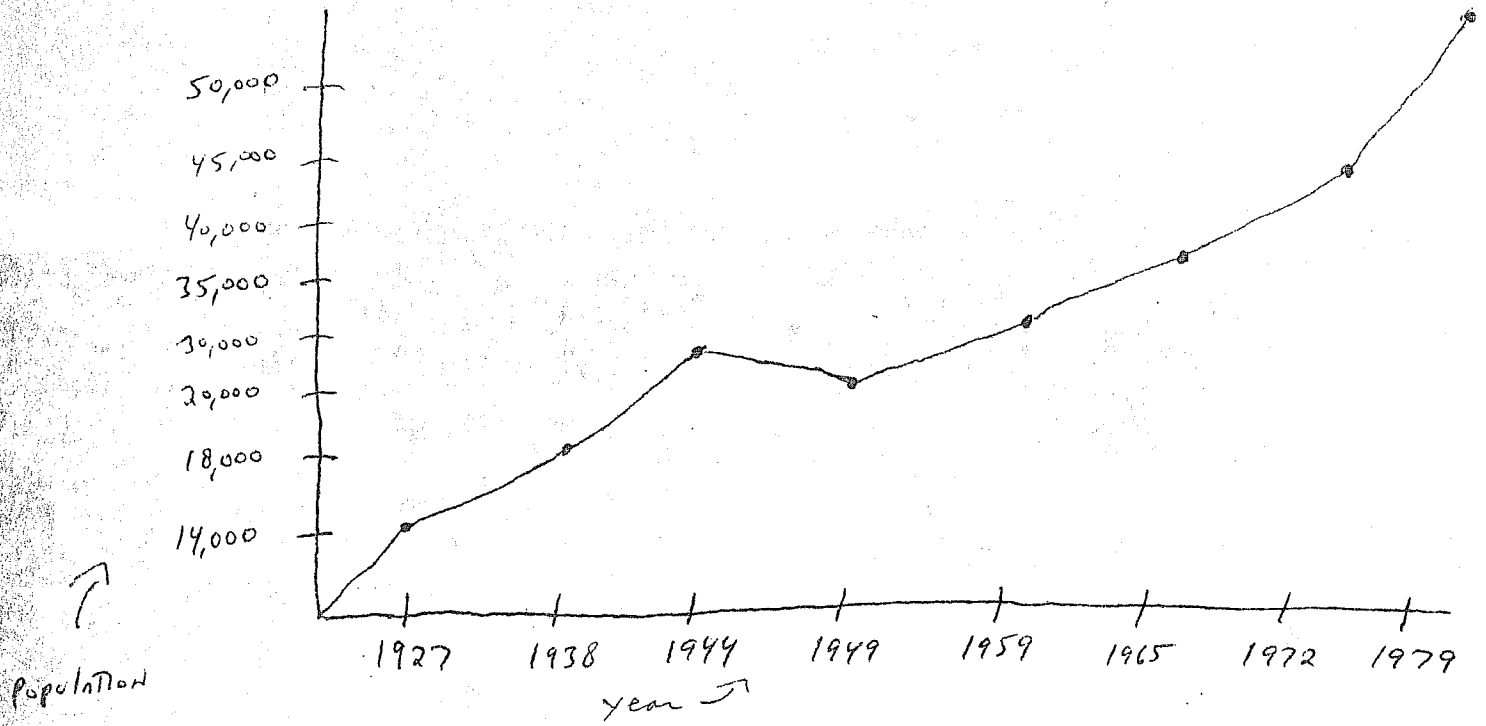
Certainly the Germanic influence was strong not only in 1850 or 1920, but for many years after that. The question is this: where did these German immigrants settle once they got to America? In 1880 Wisconsin had the biggest percentage of German born residents in the United States. The first Germans that came to Wisconsin, did so in the year 1839. They settled in the port town of Milwaukee. From there, many moved on to other areas of the state. Already by the founding of Trinity congregation in 1886, many Germans ^{had} moved to Waukesha County. It is reported for example that by 1885, 31,123 Germans moved to Waukesha County! This was an incredible number. ^{THIS} At ^{WIS}time in fact, Germans were replacing Norwegians in the village of Waukesha. Many of the Germans like the countryside of Waukesha and remained. Many others heard of the farm land and came too. Meanwhile, Norwegians were moving farther north to the Red River valley. By 1920 Germans were residents of counties in this order:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1) Milwaukee | 5) Jefferson |
| 2) Marathon | 6) Fond du Lac |
| 3) Sheboygan | 7) Racine |
| 4) Dodge | 8) Waukesha |

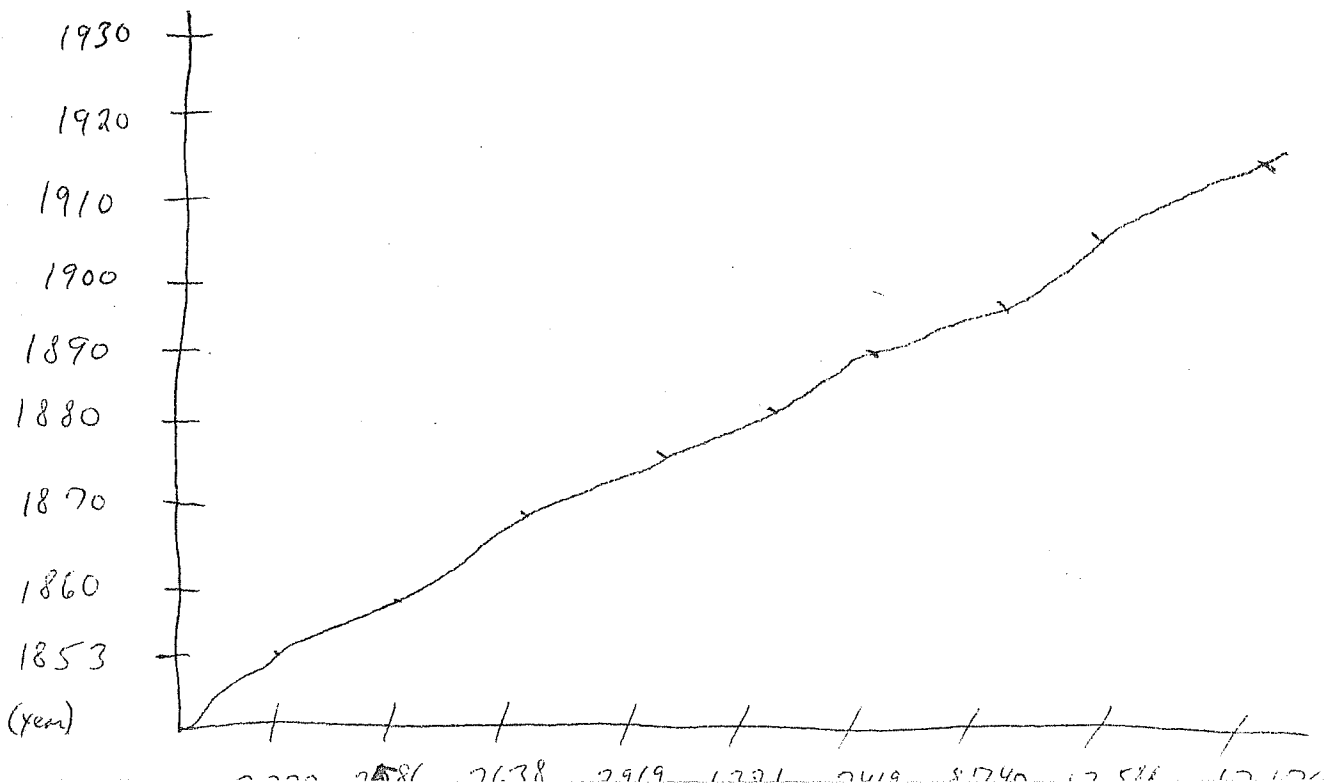
Germans poured into Waukesha. Immigration was at its height. Waukesha offered good jobs in railroading, quarrying, and farming. Trinity grew rapidly. By 1887 membership increased to 22 families. It grew so well that an option was secured on a piece of property near Cutler Park on Wisconsin Avenue. Plans were made to build a church building. There was some misgivings; many believed that they might have a debt too big to handle. As a result, the Cutler site was forgotten and several lots were purchased at the corner of Oak Street and White Rock Ave. Events proved to be good for the congregation and in 1888 a new church building was constructed. The following year a day school was opened. By 1902 membership increased to 100 families. The membership of Trinity Evangelical (German) Lutheran Church increased more throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Soon the membership totals looked like this:



at the same time see how the population increased:



it is obvious that the German immigration movement had much to do with the population of waukesha from 1850 to 1930. we see:



Of the 31,123 Germans which moved into Waukesha County, 5000 moved into Waukesha that first year alone. The Germanic influence was so great at Trinity and in the city of Waukesha that German was used in the city by many. It was common to see street-signs in the German language too. Trinity congregation used German in all its services and in its school for many years. In 1907 Trinity Lutheran school was known as "The German School." The church was known throughout the city as "The German Church." How true this was! The children and parents sang German in the church services, spoke German in the parking lots and on the playgrounds. Germans used "their" language, and it was theirs to use.

The German immigrants that came to Waukesha had much to do with the formation of Trinity church. Not only did they speak German, many of them were Lutherans too. Because there was a need for a German Lutheran church in Waukesha, Trinity was organized. It might be interesting to note that the vast majority of Germans who came to Waukesha from 1850-1930 were either Roman Catholic or Lutheran. The four churches begun before Trinity; the Congregational, the Baptist, Methodist, and the Presbyterian churches grew in membership, but not as fast. When the Germans came to Waukesha, most of them wanted to join a Lutheran or Catholic church. Trinity was the Lutheran church. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic church was built to serve those who were Roman Catholic. Even today, Waukesha is considered a Catholic/Lutheran city. In a study recently conducted; to find out what denominations people of Waukesha belonged to, these were the findings: ⁵

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>% of population members in Waukesha</u>
1. Roman Catholic	44.1 %
2. Lutheran	14.1 %
3. Methodist	7.5 %

The influx of immigrants from Germany helped increase Trinity's size. Yet, to Trinity's credit, the church was versatile enough to incorporate English too when it became necessary. By doing such, it kept its old members and attracted

those who spoke English.

Soon after Trinity's founding, English services were conducted, but in 1902 they were discontinued. Almost everyone used the German language; in school, on the playground, at home. Pastor Brockman reinstated the use of English in 1910, but the response still was not great. But then came the first world war, the depression, and world war two. These events had much to do with the changeover from the German language to the English language in the church and school. The use of English grew until, in 1947, the last regular service in German was held.

Grace English Lutheran church was founded in 1990 as an all-English church. From what I know this was a first in the synod. Grace did gain members and support from many, but because German was still used regularly by many people, and children were still being instructed in the German language at home and at school, most of Trinity's members remained. The formation of Grace didn't have any great effect of Trinity's situation. Trinity by keeping the German, kept many of their German members and when the time for change was necessary, people made the language change without having to change church membership. Thus Trinity was benefited.

Another great factor in Trinity's growth has been the importance of its Christian Day school. We all know what an evangelism tool a Christian Day school is to a church. The same would hold true for Trinity's school too: it attracted members. As early as 1889 the day school was started. Frequent church meetings were held for the purpose of accepting new members. Trinity was growing. From 1892 to 1902 a house and two lots were bought, an additional teacher was called, and an organ loft was added to the church. The present parsonage was bought and a new school was built. Membership increased to 100 families in a short time. By 1907 there were two instructors and the pastor who taught in the school with an enrollment of 88 pupils. Two years later the pastor's wife taught also.

In 1912 a second story was added to the schoolhouse to relieve overcrowding conditions. In 1958 a new church was built and the old church was then used for school classrooms. By 1961 the basement of the new church was used for two grades due to a large enrollment in the school. 1965 was the year the new school was built. Even today, in 1980 Trinity Lutheran School is growing. It has an enrollment of 185. Because of the large number of pupils, the school was expanded in 1979 with an addition of two portable classrooms.

Trinity Lutheran School has played an important role in the growth of the church for over three-quarters of a century. In fact, Trinity grade school was the second parochial school founded in the history of the city. The Catholics built the first private school. Trinity was the first Lutheran school in Waukesha. These two schools were the only private ^{grade} schools in the city from 1886 to 1942! It wasn't until Mt. Calvary built a school in 1942 on the far west side of town that Waukesha had another Christian day school. Trinity Lutheran School was blessed with a large enrollment and many years of existence which helped Trinity Lutheran Church.

Trinity Lutheran Church benefited much from its location too. Not only was the church well-known and well established, it was very easy to get to. In the early days of the city, the church and school were near the center of town.

Looking at the map, one can see Trinity was founded on the near east side of the city. Many people lived on this side of town. In fact, Trinity was in the midst of flourishing residential neighborhoods. As a result, the church was seen often and by many of the people of Waukesha.

It is important to note that as the city grew in size, the populace moved more and more to the east.* This helped Trinity because the church was located on the east side.

* IN THE EARLY YEARS.

Trinity benefited by a wide and well-paved street. Whiterock Avenue was used by many to come into town. The avenue was known as one of the main avenues of the city. Not only did people use it to go into town from the east, they used it to leave town too.

Furthermore, on weekends many people used this street to visit frame park or the bottling company. On their way, they passed the church. One could hardly miss the church on this beautiful side of town.

Another factor which served to Trinity's advantage was the fact that the church was located near downtown. At this time the closer a church was to the city, the better it was for the church. Why? Because it was nearer to the people.

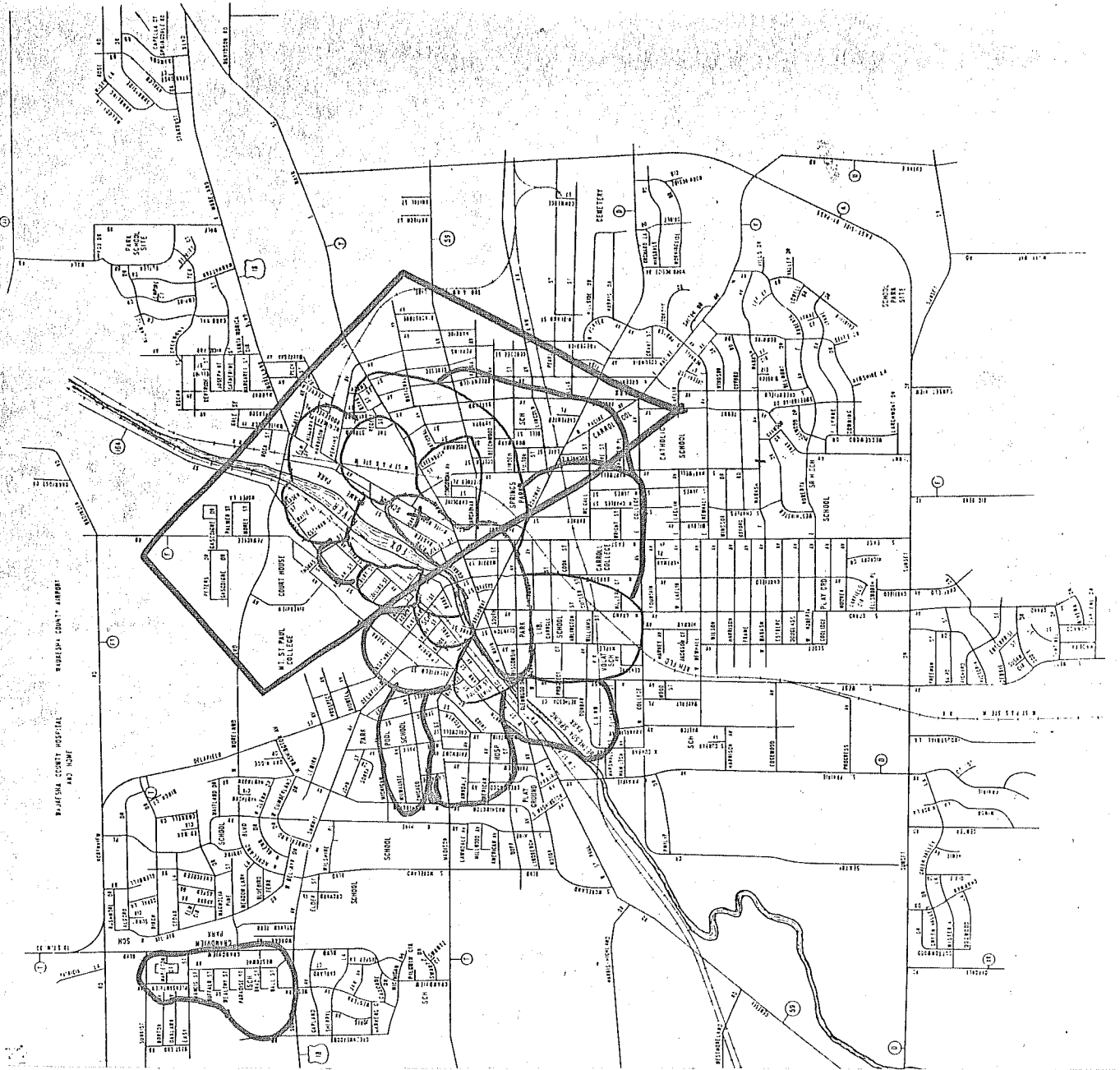
Unlike many churches in Waukesha, Trinity had the advantage of being near downtown, being near where people lived, and was located on the route people traveled.

The factors which have made Trinity so blessed in size have been many. Trinity was one of the first churches in Waukesha. It became known as the Lutheran church in town. Many German immigrants joined this congregation. The church was aided by the German language, yet was versatile to change to the English and attracted other people too. Trinity had one of the earliest schools in the city. The church had an easy access and was near downtown.

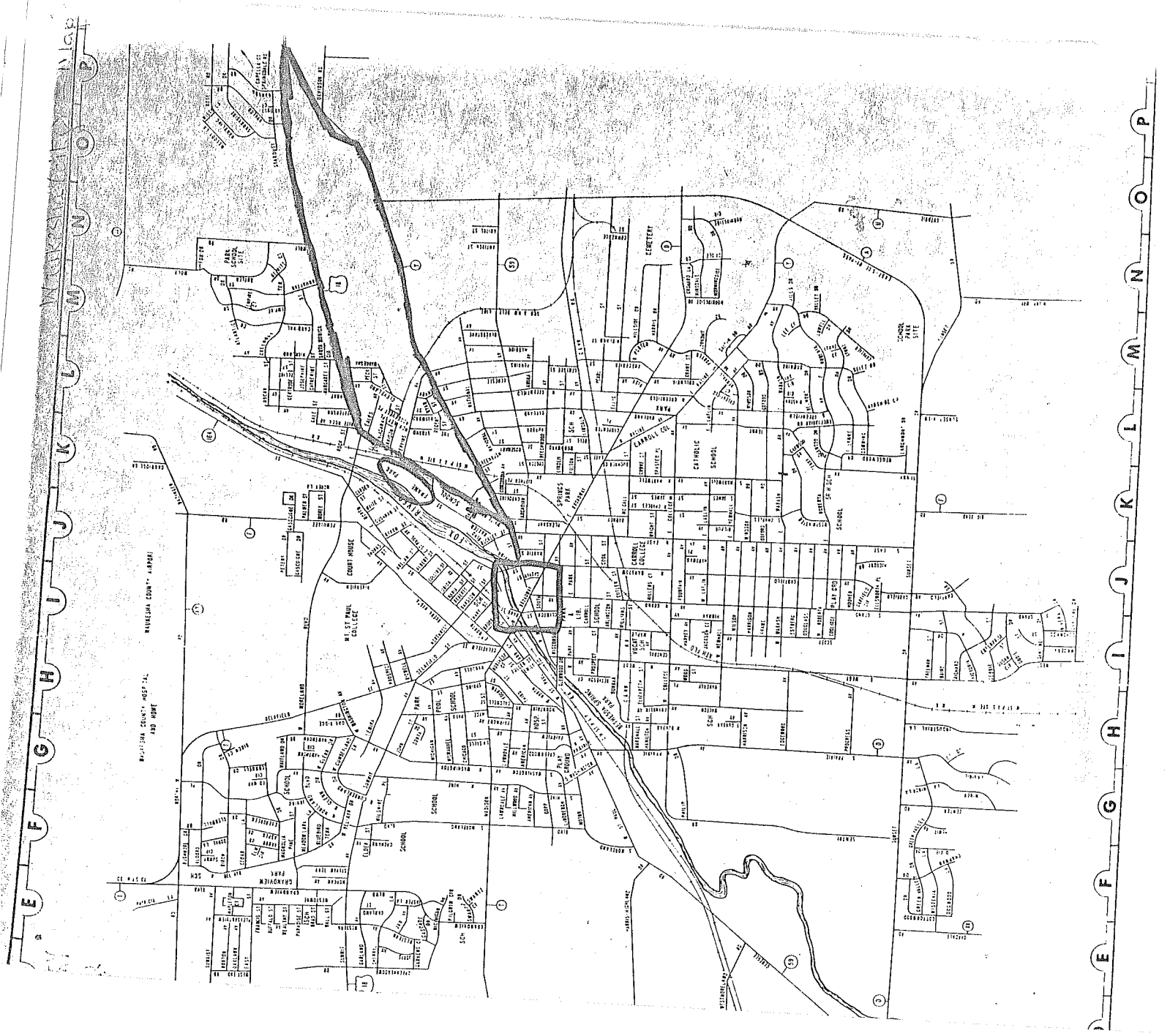
Many times in trying to find the reasons for growth we point to the efforts and prayers and support of people. We thank God for His grace which made all things possible. Certainly these "behind the scene" causes are important and responsible for any success which we might experience. At the same time it is interesting to see the visible results of God's grace and answered prayers. I hope that this paper makes us all realize just how much God shapes history to suit His purposes and for the glory of His kingdom. As Trinity approaches its 100 years, it can only look back and say, "God has richly blessed Trinity, especially in the years 1886 to 1930."

Waukesha City Map

E F G H I J K L M N O P



E F G H I J K L M N O P



MADISON COUNTY HOSPITAL AND HOME

COURT HOUSE

ST. PAUL COLLEGE

WISCONSIN STATE CAPITOL

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Endnotes

1. Trinity Church records - 75th anniversary booklet.
2. Quote from Mr. W. Schmolter concerning his father.
3. Walter Swartes, collection of the State Historical Society. (Madison, Democrat Printing, 1897) p. 3000
4. E. Frizpatrick. Wisconsin. (Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing, 1928), p. 254.
5. S. Cope. Waukesha Population Figures. (Waukesha, -----, 1978).

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