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# HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL

# Lutheran Church

CONCORD, N. C.

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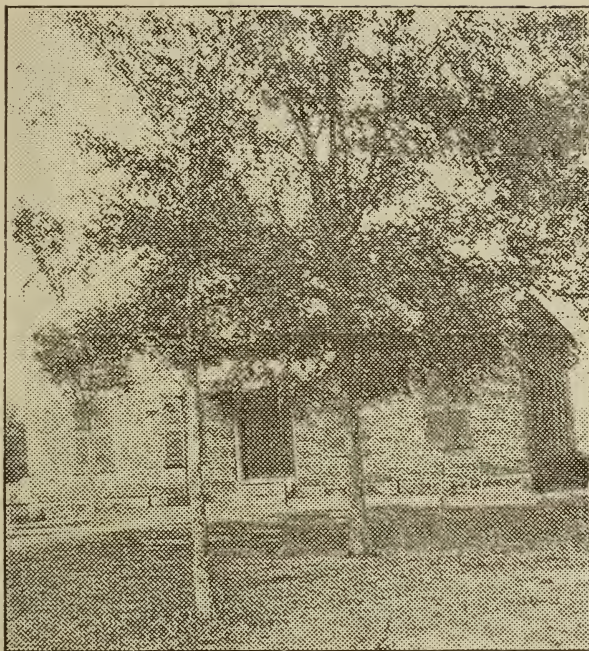
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ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CABARRUS.

We are met this evening to review and recall a history long in the making. The subject names and limits the paper. Nothing less than a volume, and historian, can do credit to the long and noble record of St. John's Church, of Cabarrus County. The records show this congregation to have been in existence for about 175 years. There's much that would be of interest in her early life, that passed with her organizers, unknown and never to be known.

The first thing that concerns us, is her birth place and people. The exact date of organization is unknown. The arrival of German Emigrants from Penn. in 1745 or there about, tells us who the people were. That a people came from Penn. into the Piedmont section about this time is a matter long ago settled. Why this people came to America is known. They came for religious freedom. It may be begging the question some-what, to conclude thus, but it looks reasonable for them to have organized for worship in this wilderness of freedom.

Those who came into this and other sections are known to have settled along creeks and water courses. While living near these water courses, their churches are to be found close by them. The first church erected was about 1 1-2 miles North East of Mt. Pleasant. It was a rude and crude building, made of unhewed pine logs, without windows, floor and chimney. It was called "Dutch Buffalo Creek Church." The name no doubt was suggested by the creek which bears the same name, and along whose banks many of her members lived.

This church was owned jointly by Lutherans and German Reformed, all of whom worshipped here. We have no records of this church having a regular pastor. It was not only used for worship but for teaching their youth. The school teacher conduct-

ed services for them, by reading sermons. He buried their dead and in cases Baptized. Preaching was doubtless limned to a minister passing through.

Here we find a graveyard. Doubtless graves can be seen there now. They were very marked a few years ago. In 1894, or more than a hundred years after their making, a monument was erected upon this spot by St. Johns congregation, to honor and perpetuate her memory.

How long this congregation held services here we do not know, but we find them relocating and re-building. The second church was erected about 1-2 mile East of the present location, on the land now owned by Mr. Harry Cline. When it was erected the records do not show, but the name "Dutch Buffalo Creek Church" still clung to it, and it still belonged to Lutherans and German Reformed. This building was made of unhewed pine logs but was larger than the first.

In 1771 we find a change taking place. It became Lutheran. A peaceful separation between Lutherans and German Reformed took place at this time. The change of ownership caused the change in name, hence it became St. John's, which it holds today.

Again a grave yard is left to witness and perpetuate her memory. The land upon which this building stood and in which the grave yard occupied, is known today as the "church piece."

A factor of no little importance and has had no little effect upon the church through this period, was the Revolutionary war. But new life is beginning to manifest itself.

A new location and building is now before it. We find the third church located in the midst of the present cemetery. This is about 1772. It too was made of logs, but was larger and better. It was built largely at the expense of one of her members, captain John Paul Barringer. He was the only member

of the building committee, and Daniel Jarrett was the contractor. The congregation erected an enclosed pew in it, exclusively for Captain Barringer and his family, as a mark of appreciation.

Up to this time the congregation had not had a regular pastor. No pastor was to be found in the Carolinas and Penn. It only remained for them to send to Germany. So in 1772 Christopher Layrie from St. Johns and Christopher Rintelman of Organ Church Rowan, were sent as a delegation to Germany for pastors and teachers. They sailed from Charleston, S. C. to London, thence to Hanover Germany. There they secured Rev. Adolphus Nussman and Gottfried Arndt. This delegation was given 90 lbs. which was delayed for more than ten years, but was eventually received which amounted to \$1500. They arrived in N. C. in 1773. Pastor Nussman and teacher Arndt remained in Salisbury and at Organ for a year. But in 1774 he became St. John's first regular pastor. St. John's had no parsonage so pastor Nussman located on the farm now owned by Prof. and John B. McAllister, entering this land in his name. Here he remained for 20 years as pastor of this congregation.

Worthy of note, the teacher who came with Pastor Nussman after two years teaching became a regular ordained preacher and remained at Organ for more than ten years.

During this time three generous members, Messrs. Jacob Fegert, Marx Hans and Jacob Thieme, paid 50 shillings for 100 acres of government land and entered it in trust for "Dutch Buffalo Creek Meeting House," hence we have the church farm. The church was already located upon it. This grant was made Oct. 22, 1782.

The war ended, the church began to show new life, and on the 6th day of Nov. 1784 a resolution was passed "for the purpose of rebuilding St. John's." The old church was torn away and the fourth one placed upon the same spot. This was a larger and



better church than any of the former ones. This was a frame structure and was erected at a cost 172 1-2 lbs. This building was painted red, and became known as the "Old Red Meeting House." The elevated pew of Captain Barringer was placed in this one.

It was dedicated on the 4th of July 1785. It remained for about sixty years and gave way to the fifth building—the present one.

This was a brick building, erected in 1845. The brick were made to the East of the church. Only the walls of the church of 1845 remain, but it was used for 43 years without change. In 1888 it was completely revised within, making it modern and churchly. It was rededicated Feb. 10, 1889. It has been revised and remodeled within of late and remains churchly.

Thus we have seen the buildings and locations changing through this long period of time, and equally as interesting have been the changes of pastors and peoples. Time will not permit of more than naming the long list of good, and faithful pastors who have served this church in its long history:

- 1—Rev. Adolphus Nussman.
- 2—Rev. C. A. G. Storch.
- 3—Rev. Adam N. Markerd.
- 4—Rev. C. A. G. Storch.
- 5—Rev. Daniel Scherer.
- 6—Rev. Henry Graeber.
- 7—Rev. John D. Schenck.
- 8—Rev. G. D. Bernheim, D. D.
- 9—Rev. J. B. Anthony.
- 10—Rev. L. C. Groseclose.
- 11—Rev. D. M. Henkel, D. D.
- 12—Rev. R. W. Petrea.
- 13—Rev. S. L. Keller.
- 14—Rev. Peter Miller.
- 15—Rev. J. O. Wertz.
- 16—Rev. S. D. Steffey.

- 17—Rev. T. C. Parker.
- 18—Rev. W. H. Hiller.
- 19—Rev. V. Y. Boozer, D. D.
- 20—Rev. J. J. Long, D. D.
- 21—Rev. C. R. Pless.
- 22—Rev. Geo. H. Cox, D. D.
- 23—Rev. Roy T. Troutman.
- 24—Rev. L. D. Miller.

Thus has God's blessings been given to this people through this honored and esteemed succession of holy men. But she has not only received of God through men, but she has given of men to God. Her name ranks among the first in sons given into the ministry. Again for time and brevity we only name those who have gone into the ministry from St. John's:

- 1—Rev. Jacob W. Barrier.
- 2—Rev. D. M. Blackweider.
- 3—Rev. Paul Barringer, Reformed Minister.
- 4—Rev. C. P. Fisher.
- 5—Rev. V. C. Ridenhour.
- 6—Rev. E. L. Ritchie.
- 7—Rev. M. L. Ridenhour.
- 8—Rev. J. B. Moose, Ph. D.
- 9—Rev. G. O. Ritchie.
- 10—Rev. B. E. Petrea.
- 11—Rev. H. S. Petrea.
- 12—Rev. C. E. Ridenhour.
- 13—Rev. B. A. Barringer.

Strange to say that the records leave us very little information about the Sunday School. That Sunday School was held is revealed. But due to the large territory the congregation covered, the Sunday School was held in the different sections of the congregation, in the church and at private homes. While the records reveal little about the Sunday School, there's no doubt but that it was the beginning of the organized churches in later years.

St. John's today is the Mother Church in this

section of the State. Through the visions and unstinted services of her pastors she is all the more honored, through the churches which sprang from her membership. Seven churches in this section sprang from her membership. It was back in 1806 St. John's saw the organization of Bethel church, Stanly County. Nearly all of whom had been members of St. John's. Again in 1837 St. Stevens church was organized, nearly all of the charter members, being members of St. John's. In 1868 we find Mt. Herman and Holy Trinity of Mt. Pleasant organizing, both of which are offsprings of St. John's. Mt. Olive was organized in 1878 directly from St. John's membership. And shortly after Mt. Olive's organization came prosperity. And lastly came the organization of the New Cold Water in 1881. Not only did she give of her members to prosecute and further this work but we are told financial assistance was given to all of them.

Her influence toward the development of the church and her institutions at large are very marked. On the 30th. of Dec. 1867 we find them taking a collection for the Southern Theo. Seminary which amounted to \$170 00. She gave of her means for the building of St. Marks, Charlotte. The records show that the first Lutheran church of Richmond, Va. received financial assistance from St. John's. Also assistance was given in Stanner, Nebraska, Immanuel. The Records show the North Carolina College and Mount Amoena Seminary of Mt. Pleasant, to have been given financial aid. And since these records were compiled, there's no way doubtless of stating the amounts and causes for which it was given.

St. John's has always been a believer in education. From her first date of organization we find the school in connection with the church. This example remains and holds good to this day.

She has been a growing church. Five times she

was rebuilt, and in each instance the records show her size as being increased. Her membership from beginning until today must be in the thousands. Her present cemetery contains the dust of about four thousand, most of whom were members and many who have passed that held membership here, have been buried elsewhere. We note with particular interest that 77 persons were confirmed in St. John's at the Spring Communion by pastor Storch who was too weak to stand but sat in the altar and gave to them and the congregation his parting blessings. Also 80 persons were confirmed in the year 1858, her membership continued to grow and today is numbered among the strongest in the rural sections.

St. John's connection with Lutheranism in the State is a vital one. The first English Lutheran minister ordained in North Carolina took place in St. John's on the 20th of May, 1794, the Rev. Robert Johnson Miller. It has the honor of entertaining the first Ecclesiastical meeting ever held by Lutherans in N. C. about 1803, although she did not become an integral part of the Synod until 1806. And has many times since had this honor.

As sons and daughters of the noble and honorable history making church, a church with an ever growing vision, dedicated to the Service of Almighty God and His Christ. May we make her a living and history inspiring church, by commemorating and perpetuating her memory and deeds. May her sons and daughters continue dedicating their lives and service to this great work, until that great Home Coming Day—when her thousands whose souls have been fed the Bread of Life within her walls shall awake out of sleep and join in, in the blessings God has provided for his people.







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