

Glimpses

of
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

By Ivan Quandt

This is the second in a year-long series "Glimpses" that focus on the celebration of the 150th anniversary of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church of Springfield, PA. In the first issue (June, 1997), we saw that the early years of St. John's congregation were very difficult ones. Founded on June 1, 1848, and granted membership in the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States the next month, it was November before they had their first resident pastor. Already in 1850, that pastor, the Rev. G. Schaller, moved to Baltimore when the fledgling congregation found that it was unable to support him. In this issue, we will see that the years that followed were no easier.

The young church might never have survived this period with no pastor, no regular place to worship, few members, and little money if it were not for Missionary Hoyer. This man from Baltimore, who with

two other pastors had commuted to Philadelphia "with more or less regularity" from 1845 to 1848, came to the rescue once more. As 1850 drew to a close, he again began assisting the St. John membership and one year later we find him as the regular pastor of the congregation.



Pastor H. Hoyer
1850 - 1858

While the Rev. Schaller was pastor, worship services were held in his home. It is not clear where they were held during the months when there was no resident pastor. In 1851, the congregation began to worship in the Vigilant Fire Department facilities on Race Street, south of Second Street, "for the convenience of some members who lived in the eastern section of the city." One by one, however, these members left St. John and in April, 1852, worship services were moved to the basement of the New Jerusalem Church (address unknown).

In spite of these makeshift conditions, the congregation decided to establish a Christian School. Mr. Henry Habermehl was hired as a teacher and classes were begun for children from the congregation and others. The St. John Lutheran School was to exist continuously for 48 years.

The stay in the basement of New Jerusalem Church was a short one. More and more, Pastor Hoyer and the members became convinced that if the work of the church was to go on, they must have a church building of their own. A great deal of discussion took place, but the congregation could not find a way to finance such a large project. Finally, four of the original founders of St. John offered to purchase property with their own funds and grant the congregation the right to build a house of worship upon it. Philip and Christian Bohn, George Pfeiffer, and Jacob Toussaint purchased a lot on Carpenter Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets and the congregation lost little time in beginning its building operations. On December 27, 1852, the cornerstone of the first church

building was laid and in December of 1853, the wood frame building was dedicated to the Glory of God.



Christian Bohn



Philip Bohn



George Pfeiffer, Sr.



Philip Toussaint

In the next issue of Glimpses, we will see how St. John fared in its new building and during the Civil War.



St. John's Church 1874

St. John 150 Years!

