

# History of Christ Lutheran Church: 1895-1995

Pine Knob 1895-1937

Highland 1937-1995

by Leland Kopps

In my research, I found that Blabaum families and the Stahman family were the first German Lutherans to settle in the Pine Knob area. They arrived in America about 1847. One family was the family of Fred Blabaum including his wife Louise and one daughter Louise who was born in Germany in 1845. They had four more daughters born here: Caroline (1849), Maria (1852), Rica (1853), and Sophia (1855). The daughter Louise married Henry Hemeir (1832-1904). They had five children: Ernest (1866), Louise Marie (1871), Marie Louise (1877), Carl Henry (1881), and Emma Caroline (1883). Marie married John Schwingel of Muscoda, Rica married Fred Yenny, Ernest married \_\_\_ Scherer, Carl married Flossie Marcum, and Emma married Conrad Schiffler.

The other Blabaum family was Henry Blabaum (1824-1860) and his wife Sophia nee Stahman (1836-1891). She was the daughter of Herman Stahman (1792-1851) and his wife Maria Dorothea (1803-1882). The early church records are incomplete, so I am not sure when they came to America. Henry and Sophia had four children: Maria (1853-1925), Christian (1854-1949), Henry (1857-1940), and Fred (1860-?). In 1860 Henry became ill and died leaving Sophia with her small children. At this time, Fred and Henry's father and mother were in Wisconsin. They were Fred (1783-?) and his wife Louise Elizabeth (1787-1881).

About this time (1849), two German families moved to Wisconsin in the Hickory Flat area: the George Schlump family and the John Mueller family. The John Drone family also moved into the same area in 1855.

The Schwingel family came to America in 1834 and settled in New York. One son Conrad (1824-1905) married Maria Schneider in 1848. They had six children: Conrad (1849-1923), Catherine (1850-1939), Henry (1852-1929), Louise (1854-1915), Maria (1856-1916), and George (1860-1930). They moved to Wisconsin in 1860. They settled in the Avoca area and were members of St. John's Lutheran in Avoca, but family members were acquainted with members of the Pine Knob and Muscoda area.

It became known to the Blabaum families that there were German people living in the Hickory Flat area and that they were having services which they, too, would attend. The children of Henry and Fred would walk over to Hickory Flat, a distance of about twelve miles, for catechism instruction. My grandmother (Maria a/k/a Mary) and Christian were confirmed in 1866 by Pastor Ed Wachtel according to my grandmother's confirmation certificate. I am not sure when the others were confirmed as the church records were not available for that time period. The children would stay at the Schlump's and return the next day or two.

These hardy pioneers had to face many difficulties, but they were faithful to their God and worshiped Him every chance they had. They would certainly put today's church people to shame in their church attendance.

In 1848, Julia Anne Burger was born in Pomerania, Germany, the daughter of Gottlieb Burger and his wife Yette nee Lampke. Julia was confirmed in Ecstrin, Germany. She married Fred Kopps at age 15. They had three children in Germany before coming to Wisconsin in 1868. They settled in the Pine Knob area. Together, they had fourteen children.

In 1868, the people in the Hickory Flat schoolhouse church decided to build a church in the village of Muscoda. The church was dedicated in 1871. The people of the Pine Knob area became members of St. Peter's in Muscoda. According to communion records (first recorded in 1879), Pine Knob people regularly attended communion services, which is the only record there is of their church attendance. They would have to travel by team and wagon or sled. My mother (Cora Kopps nee Schwingel a/k/a Schwingle) told me that they would get their clothes ready the night before so that they could get ready in a hurry. The first families going to St. Peter's were Sophia Blabaum (Henry was deceased) and her four children along with her mother Maria Dorothea Stahman, Fred Blabaum (Louisa was deceased) and his daughters, and also Fred and Henry's mother Louise Elizabeth. The Henry Hemeir family also attended.

Henry Schwingel married Emma nee Kramer in 1874. They had two sons, Henry Jr. (1875) and Cornelious (1881). Emma died when Cornelious was born. In 1882, Henry married Maria Louise nee Blabaum (Sophia's daughter). They had six children: George (1883-1957), Cora (1885-1953), Anna (1887-1949), Fred (1890-1975), Katherine (1852-1982), and Mae (1897-1991). George never married, Cora married John Kopps (son of Fred and Julia), Anna married Will Ameson (later joined the Norwegian church), Fred married Lorena Gabler (later joined the Presbyterian church), Katherine married Wilbur Berryman, and May married Clifford Wedlake. Henry Jr. married Emma Larson and later moved to Cumberland, Wisconsin. Cornelious married Bert Ramsden and later joined the Presbyterian church.

Christian Blabaum (Henry and Sophia's son) married Barbara nee Wenst in 1885. They had nine children: Anna married George Anding, Fred Larr, and John Dougherty; John married Ida Lee (later joined the Norwegian church); Sophia married George Gabler; Edith married Albert Gabler-, Walter married Della Thraum; Arthur married Gladys Schwingel; Albert married Beatrice nee Pedley and, after her death, married Alice Cole; Hilda married Arthur Mueller; Viola married Dale Kite, Casper Laufenberg, and Harold Goodwin.

Henry Blabaum (Henry and Sophia's son) married Mary nee Kopps (Fred and Julia's daughter) in 1892. They had five children: Emma, never married (still living in 1994 at age 101), Fred, died in 1914; Alvin never married, Clara, married Gordon Anderson, and Dorothea, married George Sittig. The family joined the Norwegian church in the 1930's.

After worshiping in Muscoda until 1895, they decided to ask the pastor of the Muscoda church to come to Pine Knob and have services there. I believe they thought it was easier for him to come to Pine Knob than for all of them, with their small children, to go to Muscoda. Conrad Gabler, his wife Catherine nee Donner, and their two sons, Carl and Walter, joined the families. The Charles Sittig family also joined them.

Pine Knob was a small country place five miles northeast of Highland. It had two stores, a cheese factory, and later, a telephone exchange. With the advent of cars, Pine Knob ceased to

exist. At first, they worshiped in the homes of the members. Then, later, together with the Methodist people of the area, they built a small church in the immediate area. One congregation would use the church one Sunday and the other would use it the next Sunday. At that time, services were held only every other week or every three weeks. The Methodists used the church until the 1920's and then did not use it anymore.

The first funeral in the new congregation was Fred Kopps in March 1905 and then, his daughter Sophia in December 1905 (age 13 years).

Up until 1934, the same pastor served the Muscoda, Pine Knob, and Boaz parishes. Services had to be held every three weeks or exchanged morning or afternoon services. At that time, it was decided to divide the parishes. Boaz, being the largest church, went by itself. Muscoda and Pine Knob remained a joint parish as they always had been from the early days. Reverend John Pingel was called to serve the joint parish.

In the early days the men sat on one side of the church and the women and children sat on the other side. The men would take communion first and then the ladies would receive communion. This practice continued until the early 1930's.

In 1937, it was decided that there was not much future in a small country church, so it was decided to move to the village of Highland. In Highland, there was an old Methodist church. According to the history of Highland, it was the first church in Highland (started 1845). It had not been used for several years and was in need of some repair. It was purchased for the large sum of \$500.00, which in the depression days of the 1930's, was a large amount of money.

In the early 1940's, the congregation purchased the lot across the street from the church.

In 1941, the Ben Brandt family moved to the area and transferred to the congregation from Zion Lutheran Church, Avon, South Dakota. In 1943, the Grant Wilcox family transferred from St. Peter's, Muscoda.

In 1943, the interior of the church was remodeled and a new oak floor installed.

In 1943, the Otto Gumtow family and the David Cornwell family joined by confirmation. In 1944, the Carter Wilkinson family joined the church and the Graffm family also attended. In 1945, the Cord Poppe family moved here from Boscobel. They were also from Zion Lutheran Church in Avon, South Dakota. (Another member joining our church from Zion Lutheran Church in Avon, South Dakota was my wife, Helen D. Kopps nee Vilhauer in 1947, after our marriage.)

In 1945, plans were being developed to excavate a new basement on the lot across the street which had been purchased in 1941. Cement blocks were purchased and installed creating a basement to be under the church and adding a kitchen and furnace room area. In 1946, the church was moved and placed on the new basement. The kitchen and furnace room area were covered with a cement top with hopes of someday building onto the church. A new entryway was built on the front of the church and restrooms were installed. The Ladies' Aid furnished the

kitchen with cupboards, sink, and stove. A new oil furnace was installed in the furnace room. This new furnace replaced the old wood heating stove that stood in the back of the church, making more room in the church. The building was completed and rededicated in 1947.

In 1951, the Ladies Aid purchased a new electric organ which was a big improvement over the old reed pump organ that we had been using.

The Ladies Aid of the church was organized in 1944. The ladies joined the Lutheran Women's Missionary League in 1957.

In 1970, the exterior of the church was covered with aluminum siding. The windows were covered with aluminum storm windows. Plans were made to celebrate our 75th anniversary (1895-1970). The date was set for September 20. The morning festival sermon was preached by the Reverend Maynard Brandt, a former son of the congregation. A potluck lunch was held at noon. In the afternoon, the reconsecration sermon was preached by the Reverend John Pingel, a former pastor. Pastor C.A. Rathjen, pastor of the congregation at that time, had anniversary sermons once a month for the whole year. All former confirmands were invited to attend the anniversary celebration.

In 1971, the Christ Lutheran Church in Spring Green, Wisconsin built a new church and had some used pews for sale. They were the length that we needed and were purchased at this time.

In the early 1980's, it was decided to add to the church over the kitchen and furnace area. The altar area was enlarged with new stained glass windows added and the walls were plastered throughout the church, giving it a whole new appearance. In the fall, a rededication of the church was held along with the 85th anniversary with the Reverend John Pingel giving the sermon at the afternoon service.

During this time our congregation helped start a Missouri Synod church in Platteville. The Mission Board was contacted and members helped canvass Platteville to see how many members were available. It was then decided to start a church in Platteville and the Reverend Dennis Schueler was called as pastor. Also, over the years, our congregation has been involved with the Hickory Grove Lutheran Church of rural Boscobel, having had our pastors Rathjen, Boehme, and Fehlauer serve them and also by monetary contributions.

The year 1995 was the 100th anniversary of our church in the Pine Knob and Highland area. The original part of our present church was built by the Methodists 150 years ago, so it was a milestone for the building, too. The Centennial Anniversary was a two-day celebration. All former confirmands and members were invited. On Saturday, June 24, 1995, there was a get-together to reminisce over former times. A noon luncheon was served. An evening service was held with the Reverend Randal Poppe preaching the sermon. The festival service was held Sunday morning (June 25, 1995) with the Reverend Maynard Brandt preaching the sermon. The Reconsecration Service was held Sunday afternoon with the Reverend John Poppe preaching the sermon. These pastors are all sons of the congregation.

This is the history of this Lutheran congregation for one hundred years, and earlier, when they did not have a church in the area but served the Lord with St. Peter's Lutheran Church of Hickory Flat and Muscoda.

This history was compiled by Leland Kopps. I wish to thank Marguerite Dieter for the history of St. Peter's Lutheran Church and Reverend Randal Poppe for some information.