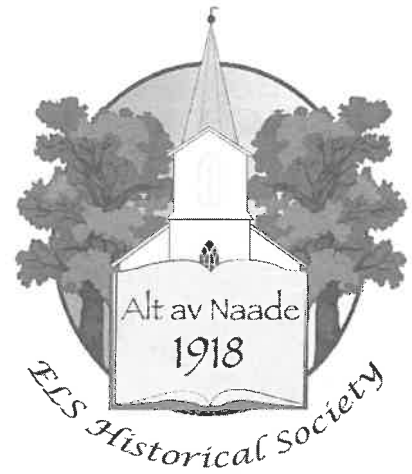


Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

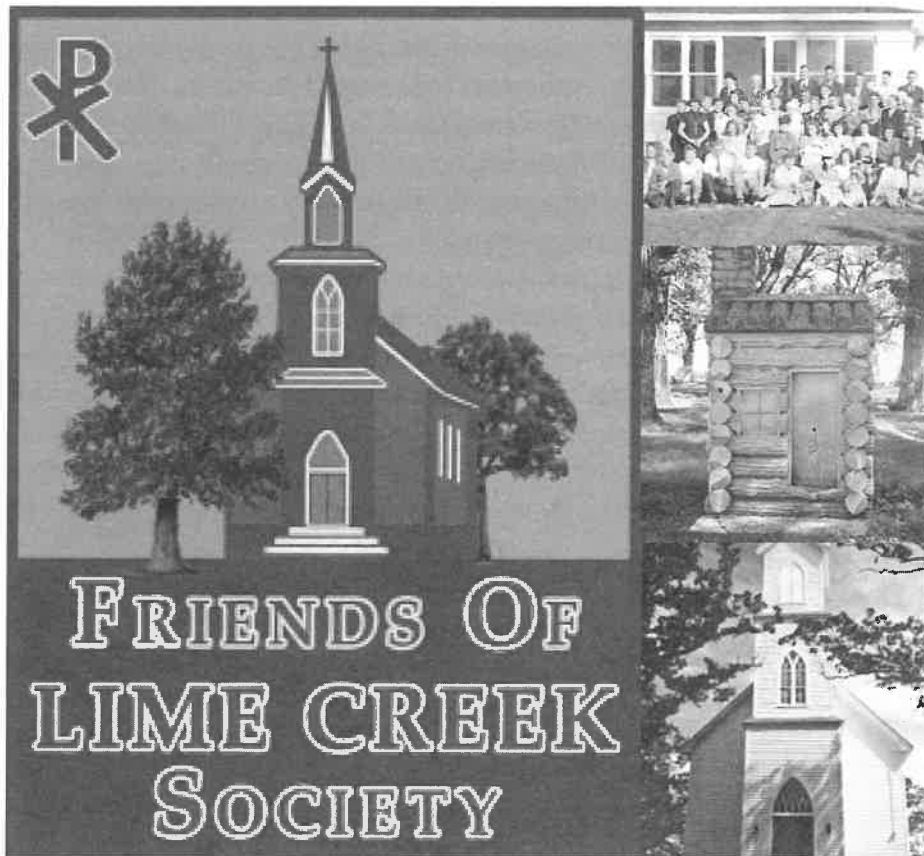


Volume 29

Issue 4

Autumn 2025

THE LEGACY OF LIME CREEK. PRESERVING ITS HISTORY, FAITH, AND HERITAGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



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- Video produced about the ELS featuring Lime Creek
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CHRISTMAS AT THE OTTESEN MUSEUM



This year's Christmas Open House at the Ottesen Museum is scheduled for Tuesday, December 9, 2025 from 2:30 to 5:30 pm. The theme is "Christmas in the Collection". We will be pulling out of storage many of the Christmas decorations in the museum's possession. Some of these have been part of previous Open Houses and others were donated as part of other collections. If you have been to an Open House in the past, some will be familiar to you and some you may have never seen before.

Along with having the chance to view the museum's collection, there will be caroling and Christmas treats. If you have never been to the museum before, this is a great time to wander through the displays at your own pace. We hope to see you there!



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Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both Synodical and local significance for publication. Articles may be edited for style, clarity, or length to allow for publication. Each issue will be deposited in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

*Oak Leaves is published quarterly by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society,
6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001*

THE ELS CHURCHES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY, IOWA -- SCARVILLE



This little map, eight miles from north to south and six miles from west to east, includes the locations of three active ELS congregations, Grace in Lake Mills, Scarville and Center, as well as the historic building of the Lime Creek church.

Go west of Lake Mills on U.S. Highway 69 for four miles and then turn right and go north on county highway R-60 for four miles and you will come to Scarville. Scarville is only 2 miles from the Minnesota state line and less than 7 miles from the Lime Creek church. It is a small town, 2020 census has 74 people living there.

Scarville, Winnebago County, Iowa, was named for Ole Scar, who owned much land in the vicinity when the town was established. Scarville was platted in 1899 when the railroad of the North Western Line was being built from Belle Plain, Iowa, to Fox Lake, Minnesota. It was incorporated as a city in 1904. It is the seventh largest city in Winnebago County.

On December 2, 2022, the Mason City Globe Gazette included an article by reporter Dick Johnson called "North Iowa Norskies Thriving" which said, "Norwegians comprise one of the largest ethnic groups in North Iowa - and Scarville is our "Norwegian-est" town, according to the 2000 census. Nearly 63 percent of the city's 97 people claimed ancestry of the blue-eyed, blond-haired, Scandinavian variety."

A big event every year is Scarville, Iowa's, 4th of July celebration. It includes a firemen's lunch from the Scarville Fire Department, breakfast through our ELS Scarville Lutheran School, ice cream and bars provided by Scarville Booster Club, pedal pull, water ball with local fire departments, an egg toss, live music by Somethin' Country, a traditional Independence Day parade down Main Avenue. The town is so small that you get to see the parade twice. At the end of town it turns around and comes back. It is advertised, "A parade so nice—you get to see it twice!" "The 4th of July celebrations in Scarville were/are so much fun! Most of the church members gather on the front lawn of the parsonage to watch the parade. ... Many family members return home for the big event so we look forward to a church reunion every year." (Emily Faugstad in Scarville church's centennial book.) (The editor of Oak Leaves also has memories from childhood of the Scarville 4th of July). You will often see people you would know from Mankato lining the parade route. In the evening there is a beautiful fireworks display.

The town of Scarville is home to Scarville Synod Lutheran Church. It's official beginning name was: Scarville Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Winnebago County, Iowa.



Scarville Lutheran Church building where the congregation worshipped before moving to the new church earlier this year. It will now provide additional space for the school

Scarville Lutheran Church was founded in 1918, but its roots go back to the founding of Lime Creek Lutheran Church, served by the pioneer pastor Rev. T.A. Torgerson and his son Rev. A.J. Torgerson. From the Lime Creek congregation, Immanuel Lutheran church was founded in Scarville. The majority of

The ELS Historical Society depends on the membership/subscription fee to fund our projects and produce Oak Leaves. Even without the annual meeting our work still goes on. If you pay your membership annually, you may send your check to

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Rev. Emil Hansen

Immanuel Lutheran Church voted to enter the 1917 merger of Norwegian Lutheran church bodies. For reasons of conscience, eight families in Scarville could not enter the merger. They withdrew from Immanuel and formed their own congregation, which

became one of the founding congregations of the ELS. Rev. Emil Hanson was the pastor. He served on the Constitution Committee which completed the legal organization of the synod (ELS) in 1919.

In 2018 a centennial celebration was held. The theme for the anniversary from Psalm 118 was on the cover of the centennial book. "This is the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes."

Here are some other statements from the congregation's web page: www.christiswithus.com. "Grace is the foundation of Scarville and Center Lutheran Churches. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross and rose from the dead to save all people from their sins. Because of this great sacrifice, God promises eternity in heaven to all who believe His Word."

"Our churches have been in the community for nearly 150 years. We have not remained in the same church buildings during this time, but our message has stayed the same. We believe that the entire Bible is the true and holy Word of God, and we trust in the work of the Triune God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – to bring us to faith and to heaven."

The Immanuel congregation, which had been in the ELCA, decided to discontinue in July 2024. They offered to sell their vintage 1952 church building to our ELS Scarville congregation at a bargain price. The congregation has since moved to its new building for worship. The following two paragraphs about the move are from ELS President Glenn Obenberger's Newsletter of May 2025.



The Scarville congregation and visitors on April 6, 2025, in front of their new church

On April 6, 2025 the ELS Scarville Lutheran congregation had their last Divine Service at the building where they had worshiped for nearly 106 years. Later that same day, the congregation dedicated a new home across town. They had purchased the church building of the Immanuel congregation in Scarville which was built in 1952. Immanuel, which had been a member of the ELCA, had its final service in July of last year. Interestingly, that is the congregation from which Scarville split in 1917. This new church building will be able to hold the growing Scarville congregation. Scarville's historic church building will be used by their school.



The interior of the new Scarville church

God provided a beautiful day so that the congregation and the friends of the congregation could begin the dedication outside as planned. All gathered in front of the Scarville church building. The assembly first

sang the Doxology in thanksgiving to God for the many years He had blessed the congregation with that house for worship. Then the procession began, led by a processional cross, through the town to the new church. Members carried the chancel furnishings and communion ware. The assembly made their way to the new church building, singing “Ye Lands, to the Lord,” “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates,” and “Salvation Unto Us Is Come.” After a picture and the ceremonial opening of the doors, the worshipers entered the sanctuary where they saw the old familiar altar, pulpit, and baptismal font brightly lit up in their new home. The congregation’s pastor, Rev. Joshua Skogen officiated the service and dedication. A son of the congregation, Rev. Peter Faugstad, served as lector, and longtime former pastor, Rev. Thomas Rank, preached the sermon on Ephesians 2:19–22. President Obenberger addressed the congregation after the service. Ten ELS clergy were present for the day, as well as one retired pastor from the WELS. It was an encouraging day for all as we rejoiced in the many blessings that God has graciously given the congregation, such as the new building, and especially Christ’s gospel of forgiveness and salvation in the Word and Sacraments which He graciously preserves among us.



Scarville Lutheran School

The congregation also operates a school. Scarville Synod Lutheran School has been serving children in the church and community for over 80 years. It operated from 1927 to 1942 and again from 1958 to the present. The school follows the classic Christian education model in which students are taught Bible history, catechism, Latin, and many hymns and Bible passages, as well as the standard courses of language, mathematics, social studies, science, and music. The unique one-room school gives students a personal and

nurturing environment which greatly improves the education that each child receives.

The congregation, along with Center Lutheran Church, has a radio program at 8:a.m. on Sunday mornings. It consists of a half-hour of sacred music, prayers and a sermon. You can listen to it – on KIW, FM 107.3, on the internet at radio.net. Rev. Joshua Skogen is the current pastor.



RESTAURATION

On October 9, 2025, Leif Erikson day, the replica of the sloop Restauration arrived at the harbor in New York City, right on schedule. It had reenacted the voyage made by 52 Norwegian emigrants 200 years ago. It had left Stavanger on July 4, the first ship to bring Norwegians to the United States right from Norway. A bicentennial celebration was held with the presence of Crown Prince Haakon of Norway, among many local dignitaries, was on the pier to welcome the ship.

In his remarks, Prince Haakon said, “The millions of stories that make up two centuries of Norwegian immigration to the United States tell of hope and disappointment, of success and challenges. But above all, they bear witness to the generations of Norwegians who were inspired to seek a new life of freedom and possibilities. ... In 1825, a small ship called the Restauration left Stavanger, carrying 52 brave Norwegians. They were seeking religious freedom and new opportunities. When they arrived here in New York Harbor, they didn’t just step onto American soil — they laid the first stones of a new bridge between our two nations. While they were at sea a baby was born, a tangible illustration of the quest for a new life. ... That first arrival in 1825 sparked a wave of migration. Over the next hundred years, around 800 000 Norwegians made their way to America.”

“Let’s keep celebrating our past.”

THE FIRST DECADE OF ELS GROWTH

Pastor Paul Webber

ELS Historical Society Presentation 2025

When the merger of Norwegian Lutherans took place in 1917, the remaining small minority met at the Morrison memorial Chapel where Fairview Lutheran Church was worshiping at the time, to begin organizing their new church body. Temporary officers were elected and a 1918 meeting was planned.

The next year at Lime Creek Lutheran Church, 13 pastors, and delegates from five congregations attended, along with 175 guests. The guests included four LCMS pastors.

The next year the constituting convention of the ELS was hosted by the congregation in Albert Lea, Minnesota. Because that congregation did not yet have a building of its own, the convention was held in the Gulbrandson implement building. This constituting convention will be treated by this presentation as the cutoff for congregations being considered founding members of the ELS.

At the 1919 convention there were 14 member congregations of the synod. These were:

1. Center, Scarville IA
2. Fairview, Minneapolis MN
3. First Shell Rock, Northwood IA
4. Joice, Joice IA
5. Lake Mills, Lake Mills IA
6. Lime Creek, Lake Mills IA
7. Our Savior's, Albert Lea MN
8. Our Savior's, Milnor ND

9. Parkland, Tacoma WA
10. Scarville, Scarville IA
11. Somber, Northwood IA
12. St. Luke's, Chicago IL
13. St. Mark's, Chicago IL
14. St. Paul's, Chicago IL

Also, in 1919, two pastors who had remained at Luther College resigned from their positions and joined the ELS, S.C. Ylvisaker and Oswald Overn. Both of those men had stayed at their posts and gone into the merger in protest, in the hope that from their teaching positions they would be able to exert a positive influence. But the thing that pushed them over the edge and out of the merger was the entrance of the merger synod into the national Lutheran council, a national body that included Lutheran synods of vastly varying confessional adherence.

Ylvisaker was one of the essayists at the 1920 convention, and this new organization was the topic of his essay. Not long after this, Ylvisaker and Overn were called to teach at Concordia St. Paul, where along with teaching courses, they would focus on the ELS students who enrolled there. In exchange, the ELS agreed to pay half their salaries.

The way that those two men were treated shows the spirit of the ELS in those years. The temptation might have been to view Ylvisaker and Overn with suspicion since they had both gone into the merger. But not only were they welcomed into the synod, they were quickly called to those teaching positions at Concordia to, in a sense, represent the Synod and play a major role in the shaping and training of its future pastors and leaders. So clearly there was no desire on the part of the pastors and lay leaders of the ELS to make these men, or others later, grovel or apologize for coming to the same decision about the merger synod according to a different timeline.

In 1920, 6 congregations joined the synod:

-
1. Bethany, Story City IA, Now Ames
 2. Chester Norwegian Lutheran Congregation, now Mount Olive, Trail MN
 3. First Evanger, Fertile MN,
 4. Hartland, Hartland MN
 5. Our Savior's, Madison WI
 6. Western Koshkonong, in Deerfield WI
 7. Zion, Marshfield OR

Every congregation that joined the ELS this year and in the following years, had a story and a reason for doing so. However, for many of these congregations, the story is pretty much this, that after a few years in the merger, people decided that they could not continue in good conscience, so they left to join the ELS. Sometimes it was the majority of a congregation that voted to do this. While other times it was a minority that broke off to form a new congregation.

So what we will do tonight is look at those situations where there was more going on, where there were certain noteworthy people involved, or situations that serve to illustrate how the ELS and the first generation of its congregations handled this situation which was very much in flux.

Hartland, Hartland MN

1. The exact founding date for the Hartland congregation isn't clear, but the cornerstone of the building in the town of Hartland was laid in 1891
2. The merger affected this congregation in a measurable way earlier than in most places, because in 1915 the congregation had already split it. There must have been a lawsuit in connection with this split, because the records show that a court granted the breakaway group the parsonage and the congregation that eventually joined the ELS the church building, which is pictured. But what's interesting is that even after this split, both the congregations were members

of the Norwegian synod.

3. The breakaway group, called cross of glory, happily entered the merger in 1917. But Hartland Lutheran Church didn't. Hartland was like other congregations that joined the ELS right away, but weren't founding members. Erling Teigen explains:

4. A lot of congregations just didn't know what they were going to do. A lot of churches like this were always sympathetic to the new little synod, but didn't take the plunge right away.

Our Savior's, Madison WI

1. The pastor of Our Savior in Madison was Holden Olsen, who was one of the 13 at Lime Creek. But not all of the 13 had their congregations ready to go.
2. Like Hartland, Our Savior was never actively NOT in the ELS, they just didn't join until 1920. This is from their congregational history: "In 1917, the Scriptural doctrine of the election of grace again came up for consideration. Our congregation refused to accept the Madison Settlement, and by membership in the reorganized Norwegian Synod, and that synod's renewed membership in the Lutheran Synodical Conference, they showed adherence to the historic Lutheran Confession of 1580.
3. One issue this congregation had was lodge membership. This eventually caused the congregation to split in 1922, at which time Olsen left to become the president of Bethany Lutheran College, and S.C. Ylvisaker was called to be the new pastor.

Western Koshkonong, Deerfield WI

1. Western Koshkonong is like our Savior in that it also claims to be a founding member of the ELS, even though they weren't accepted into membership at the constituting convention. But like with Our Savior and Holden Olsen, even though Western Koshkonong wasn't a founding member of the synod, they were involved in the founding of the synod.
 2. This is because the pastor of Western Koshkonong
-

up to 1917 had been M.V. Wiese. He was a leader of the group opposing the merger, and was also involved with the pastors who arranged the mini-convention in 1917. But Wiese, himself, didn't bring the congregation into the ELS. That fell to his successor, L.S. Guttebo, who was called in 1918, and was also one of the original 13 at Lime Creek.

3. There is no actual reason why this congregation wasn't a member by 1919. Again to quote Erling, Even though they weren't a founding member, they were in on the ground floor.

Zion Lutheran, in Marshfield OR is no longer in the synod, but there are some interesting things about them.

1. They were the only congregation that voted against the motion for the ELS to take control of Bethany Lutheran College.

2. Then, in the early years of the depression, their pastor left, and the ELS wasn't able to provide them another one. They began to be served by a local LCMS pastor, and seemed to like this, because they joined the LCMS without telling anyone. The president of the ELS described the action as "mendacious."

In 1921, 4 more congregations joined the ELS

1. Mt. Sterling, Mt. Sterling WI
2. Our Savior's, Hayfield MN
3. Cross Lake, Polk County MN
4. Our Savior's, Princeton MN -

Of these only Our Savior's, Princeton, is still in the ELS.

5. The Congregation was founded in 1920, and was comprised of the pastor and 35 families who withdrew from the merger church in town to form a new congregation. They did this with the intent purpose of joining the ELS, because as their congregational history explains: "they wanted to remain faithful to

the Scriptural truths to which the Old Norwegian Synod had held."

6. New land was bought on which a new church and the parsonage were both built, both of which are still standing. Our Savior then hosted the ELS convention in 1922.

At that convention, 6 more congregations joined the ELS

1. Our Savior's, New Hope WI, now Amherst Junction
2. Scandinavian Lutheran Church, in Holton MI
3. First Lutheran, in Suttons Bay Michigan
4. Forest Lutheran, in Forest City IA
5. English, in Cottonwood MN
6. And the congregation in Delhi MN

Scandinavian Lutheran in Holton MI at first went into the merger, but then in December of 1920 they voted to withdraw.

1. Specifically, they voted on the December date to notify the president of merger synod that the congregation was withdrawing its membership from the synod because false doctrine was being tolerated. This false doctrine was that man contributes to his own salvation. We see from this decision that the laity of the congregation were well-versed in doctrine, and saw from the scriptures that this wasn't a defensible position.

2. This was a lay-led movement, because their pastor at the time, Rev. Halvorson, didn't want to leave the merger, and the month after the congregation decided to leave the merger he tendered his resignation and accepted a call to a church in Alpena MI. At that time the congregation accepted his resignation.

3. However, at a meeting in March, 1921, at which J.A. Moldstad from Chicago was present, the congregation asked Halvorson to keep serving them through July

of that year, so that the confirmation students could finish their studies. This temporary arrangement had the approval of Moldstad.

4. K.L. Guttebo accepted the call to serve the congregation in 1922.

First Lutherans in Suttons Bay MI, was also, at first, swept into the merger, but this was partially because they were vacant at that time.

1. In 1918, they called G. Guldberg, who had also gone into the merger, but with serious reservations. Many members of the congregation felt the same way, which is described in the congregation's history as having been a "generally unsettling situation."

2. On Oct. 1, 1921, Guldberg offered the congregation his resignation (with 6 months notice) because he could no longer continue in the merger synod. The congregation accepted the resignation, but did not pursue calling another pastor.

3. On April 1, 1922, the congregation decided to recall Guldburg and resign from the merger synod. The congregation also applied for membership in the ELS. This decision resulted in a split in the congregation, but the congregation's history explains that those who remained were stronger in their conviction to remain true to God's Word completely.

The church in Forest City IA went into the merger originally, and also merged with the other Lutheran church in town. So in a sense they went into the merger double.

1. All the worship services for the merged congregation were held at the building of the other congregation, and eventually all the pews, and furnishings had been moved to the other church. When services were occasionally held at the synod church, they had to use folding chairs.

2. But in not too long many of the old Norwegian synod members became dissatisfied with the whole merger, and talk began of reestablishing their old congregation. One could suppose that this was due

to the enduring influence of Emil Hanson, who had been the pastor in Forest City from 1908 through 1913. He was one of the original 13 at Lime Creek.

3. The unmerging of the two congregations took place in a more or less peaceful way, because in 1921, the old synod church building was sold to this group.

English Lutheran Church in Cottonwood MN was like a modern ELS congregation, in that it was already a union of Lutherans from different backgrounds who worshipped only in English and were united, not by their country of origin, but by their common confession.

1. The first Lutheran church organized around Cottonwood, MN was the "Yellow Medicine Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation," organized in 1869. This far-flung group was divided into three parishes to make it easier for members to attend services. In 1880 the area of cottonwood became part of the "silo congregation." All these churches were affiliated with the Norwegian Synod.

2. During the election controversy, the pastor of Silo was on the side of the anti-Missourians. This eventually resulted in a breakoff group organizing in 1888 as "The Cottonwood Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church."

3. In June 1909, the Cottonwood Norwegian Lutheran Church merged with the LCMS congregation in Posen. The resulting new congregation was called "Cottonwood English Evangelical Lutheran Church."

4. The uniting thing for this congregation was not a shared culture or language, but Confessional Lutheranism. And all the work there for both the Norwegians and the Germans was done in English. It still remained affiliated with the Norwegian Synod.

5. When the 1917 merger happened, the Cottonwood congregation didn't take any action, which technically meant that it went into the merger. But the congregation always considered itself, and acted, in fellowship with the churches of the Synodical Conference.

6. The cottonwood congregation shared a pastor, Max Mommsen, with the congregation in Delhi and also with two churches in Belview, both of which stayed in the merger at this time. So we see that there was a lot of patience being exercised in the greater parish, with hard lines not being drawn, and churches being given time to think the issues through according to their own schedule

7. The cottonwood and Delhi congregations officially joined the ELS in 1922.

8. The Delhi congregation eventually fizzled in the 70's, and the remaining members joined the Belview congregations.

In 1923 three congregations joined the ELS, Jerico, Saude, and Rockwell Lutheran in Norman County MN, which is no longer in existence.

Both Jerico and Saude are very significant congregations in the history of the ELS.

1. Jerico had been founded in 1867 under the pastoral direction of UV Koren. At first it was called the Crow Creek congregation, and then later the Crane Creek congregation.

2. By 1877, when the congregation joined the Norwegian synod, it numbered 380 souls

3. The election controversy of the 1880's resulted in a minority breaking away to form a separate congregation, which was part of the anti-missourian brotherhood.

4. The congregation became independent at the time of the 1917 merger because of a faithful Pastor, M.K. Bleken. They joined the ELS in 1923 and then hosted the 1924 convention. Ever since then, the congregation has been known as Jerico Lutheran Church.

1. Saude was formed in 1857 as the Dale Norwegian Congregation.

2. This congregation was also served by U.V. Koren.

3. When Koren retired in 1869, the congregation formed a new multi-point parish with Crane Creek, Cresco, and Orleans.

4. The election controversy resulted in a small number of families leaving Saude to form an "anti-Missourian" congregation. Also at this time, Cresco and Orleans formed their own parish, leaving Saude and Crane Creek (Jerico) paired together.

5. At the time of the merger, Saude joined Jerico by becoming independent, and then in joining the ELS in 1923.

6. That same year, H. M. Tjernagel was installed as pastor

In 1924 4 more congregations joined the ELS, bringing the total to 37. These were Nicollet Lutheran, now called Norseland, East and West Paint Creek, and Boston.

The Church in Norseland was a three-congregation parish in 1917: Norseland, Swan Lake, Norwegian Grove. Norseland and Swan Lake both entered the merger. Norwegian Grove (even though served by the same pastor, J. Strand, was independent, and stayed that way until 1977).

We will continue this article in future issues as space permits



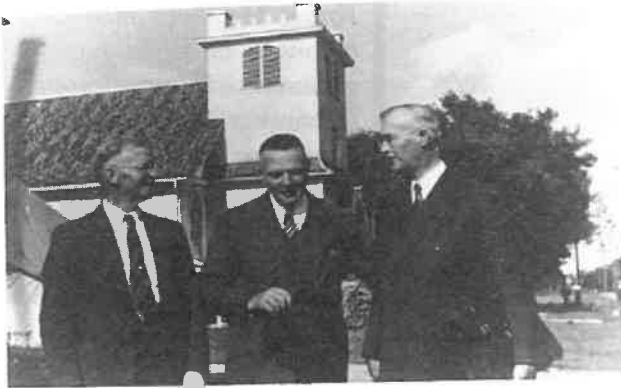


ACORNS

FROM THE ELS ARCHIVES



Theodore G. Gullixson - Archivist



Guttebo, N. Madson, S.C. Ylvisaker at 1942 convention at First Shell Rock, Northwood. Iowa



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20th anniversary of Bethel Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD on 29 October 1961. The three Bethel pastors are Rev. Nils Oesleby, 1941-1946, Rev. Victor Teiste, 1959-present, Rev. Torald Teigen, 1947-1958



Pastors officiating at the 100th anniversary of East and West Paint Creek Lutheran Churches. The centennial of East and West Paint Creek Lutheran Churches was held on September 21, 1986. East Paint Creek celebrated at the 10:30 am service, with Rev. Eivind Unseth preaching. West Paint Creek held their service at 2:00 pm, with Rev. Milton Tweit preaching. The following pastors participated in both services: Left to Right: Reverends Walther Gullixson, George Orvick, Milton Tweit, Eivind Unseth, Theodore Gullixson, John Smith, and Mark DeGarmeaux.



Rosella Iverson and Vivian Unseth

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Evangelical Lutheran Synod

