

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

History of the First Dakota-District of the Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States, by C. G. Eisenberg. Translated by Anton H. Richter. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982. x, 258 pp. Index of parishes. \$26.25 cloth, \$13.75 paper.

The Iowa Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, established among Germans coming to Iowa, was founded in 1854. As German immigrants settled in other states and territories, the synod expanded its efforts. As early as 1879 it had begun work in the Dakotas. Out of those early efforts developed the Dakota District of the Iowa Synod.

C. G. Eisenberg, a clergyman from Germany, served for many years in the Dakota District, both as local pastor and as district official. In 1922 his history of the district was published in German. His work consists of five parts: (1) the early history (1879–1891); (2) missionary work in the Dakotas; (3) brief historical sketches of 47 individual parishes or congregations in the district; (4) a sketch of the history of the Lutheran College—it appears to have been more of an academy—established at Eureka, South Dakota; (5) a synodal sermon. The author describes such realities as the harsh poverty faced by pastors and their people, the challenges of great distances, difficulties in travel, competition from “sects and zealots,” and the anti-German sentiments that hampered the work during World War I. He provides insights into the frustrations and discouragements faced by pioneer missionary pastors, many of whom “got goose pimples when they heard the word Dakota” (10). Although the work is not that of a professional historian, it enables the reader to sense anew some of what was involved in the transition from the established churches of Europe to the free church environment in America.

Anton H. Richter, professor in the department of foreign languages at South Dakota State University, has performed a valuable service with the publication of his translation of Eisenberg’s *History*. The translation is readable and quite smooth. Richter’s introduction is helpful in providing context, and his notes at the end of the work help to clarify obscure names, words, and references. The work will be welcomed by students of immigration, settlement patterns in the upper Midwest, and the Lutheran church in the United States.

WALDORF COLLEGE

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