

## Growth of the Iowa District

From 1851-1860 migrations of Germans to this country surpassed all others. Many of the new immigrants were attracted to the rich soil of Iowa and this new wave of Germans was reflected in the growth of Lutheranism. In 1863 the Missouri Synod had two resident Lutheran pastors in Iowa. Eleven years later, in 1872, Pastor Phillip Studt reported to the *Lutheraner* that this number had increased to twenty-one. In that same year Synod records show twenty-six Lutheran churches had been established in Iowa, stretching from Dubuque, Clinton, Davenport, Sherrill, Grand Mound, Monticello, and Lowden in the east to Fort Dodge, Dayton, Boone, Dexter, Lacona, and Clarinda in the west. The remaining thirteen churches were sandwiched between these towns at Riceville, Waverly, Fairbank, Newhall, Marshalltown, State Center, Luzerne, Atkins, Homestead, Marengo, Victor, What Cheer, and Wellman.

Since 1855 the Rock Island-Peoria Pastoral Conference, and the congregations associated with it, had formed a part of the Western District of the Missouri Synod. It was natural, how-

ever, that the pastors of the Iowa churches should desire a closer contact with each other in order to develop an effective ministry. At the convention of the Western District in 1873, the request for a separate Pastoral Conference was granted.

The formation of this Conference in Iowa stimulated the growth of Lutheranism throughout the State. Congregations and pastors were bound into a closer fellowship which resulted in mutual encouragement as well as more effective administration. It is reported that the annual meetings enjoyed exceptional attendance by the pastors. As is customary in the conference of the Missouri Synod, much time was spent in presenting and discussing doctrinal essays. Due consideration was given to church-practice with the result that a high degree of uniformity in both doctrine and procedure was attained.

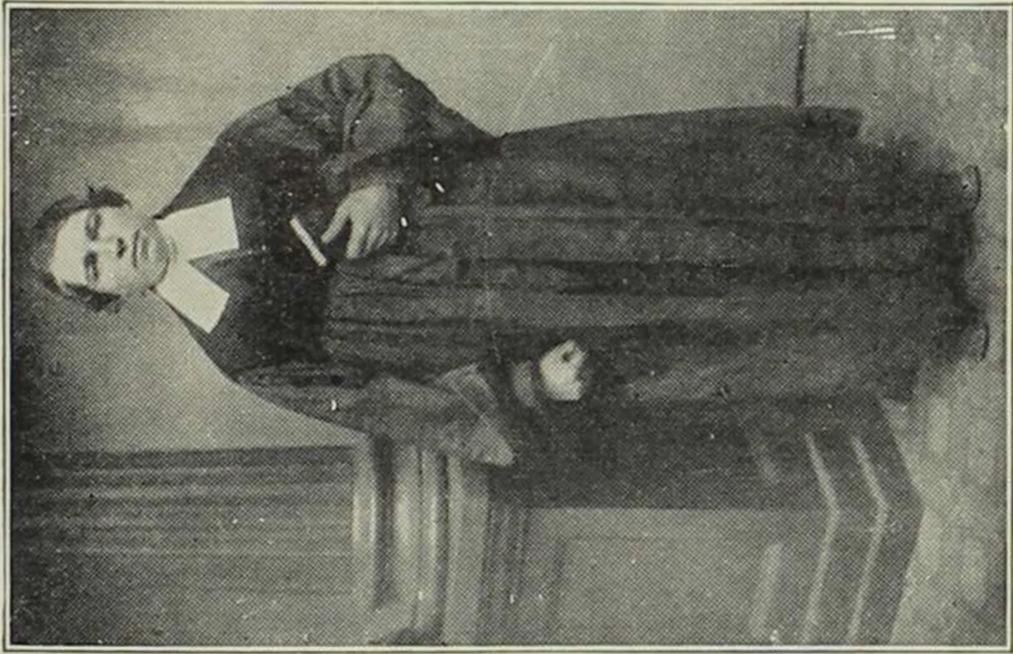
Between 1873 and 1878 the number of pastors in Iowa rose from 21 to 42. During this same period many preaching stations became full-fledged congregations with a resident pastor who in turn served many new preaching stations. In 1878 alone, eight candidates of theology were called into Iowa, six from Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, and two from the Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois.

The large increase of pastors coupled with the

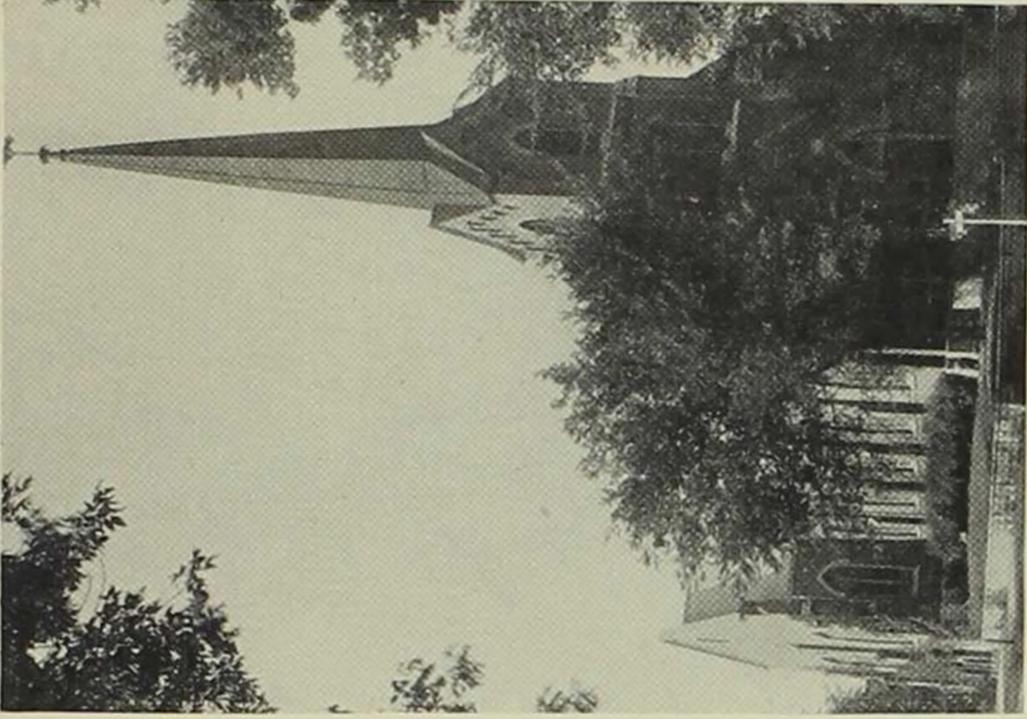
growing number of congregations led the Iowa Pastoral Conference to request the Missouri Synod's permission to establish a separate Iowa District. This was in accord with the constitutional provision stating: "The Synod is divided into districts, the geographical boundaries of which are determined by the Synod and are altered by it according to circumstances." In May of 1878 the Missouri Synod granted the request.

The first session of the Iowa District of the Missouri Synod was held in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge on Wednesday morning, August 20, 1879. The meeting began with a service of worship in which the President of the Missouri Synod, the Rev. H. C. Schwan, delivered the sermon. In the afternoon session the formal organization of the Iowa District took place.

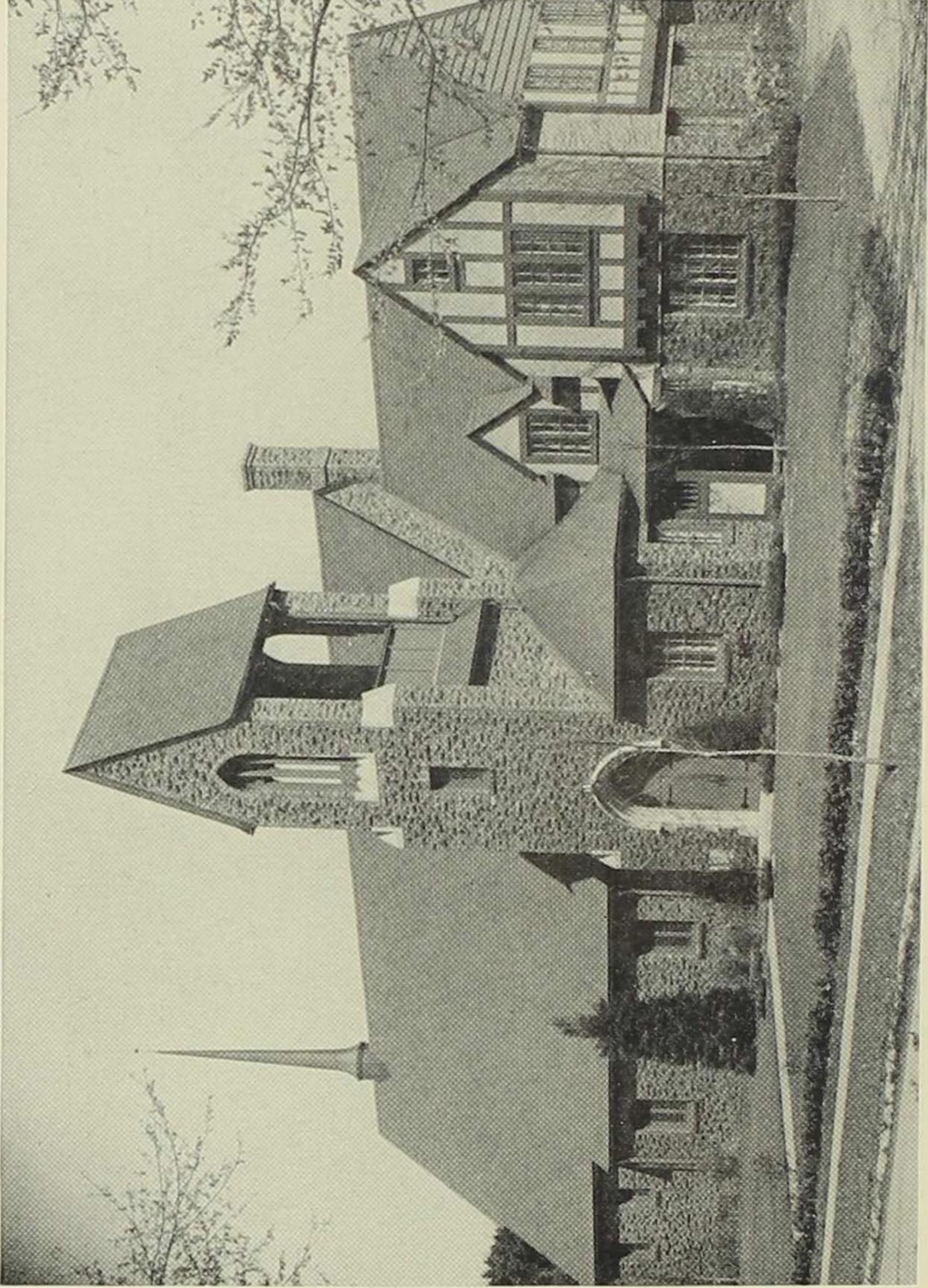
Five congregations — Fort Dodge, Dubuque, Davenport, Robin (Atkins), and Victor — were charter members of the Iowa District and held voting membership in the Synod, by virtue of their membership in the Western District. Eighteen congregations — Lotts Creek (Algona), Buena Vista, Caloma, Colfax Township, Dayton, Denison, Hampton, Hanover Township, Le Mars, Lowden, Magnolia, Marcus (two congregations), Maxfield Township, St. Ansgar, Spirit Lake, Sumner, Webster City — were accepted into



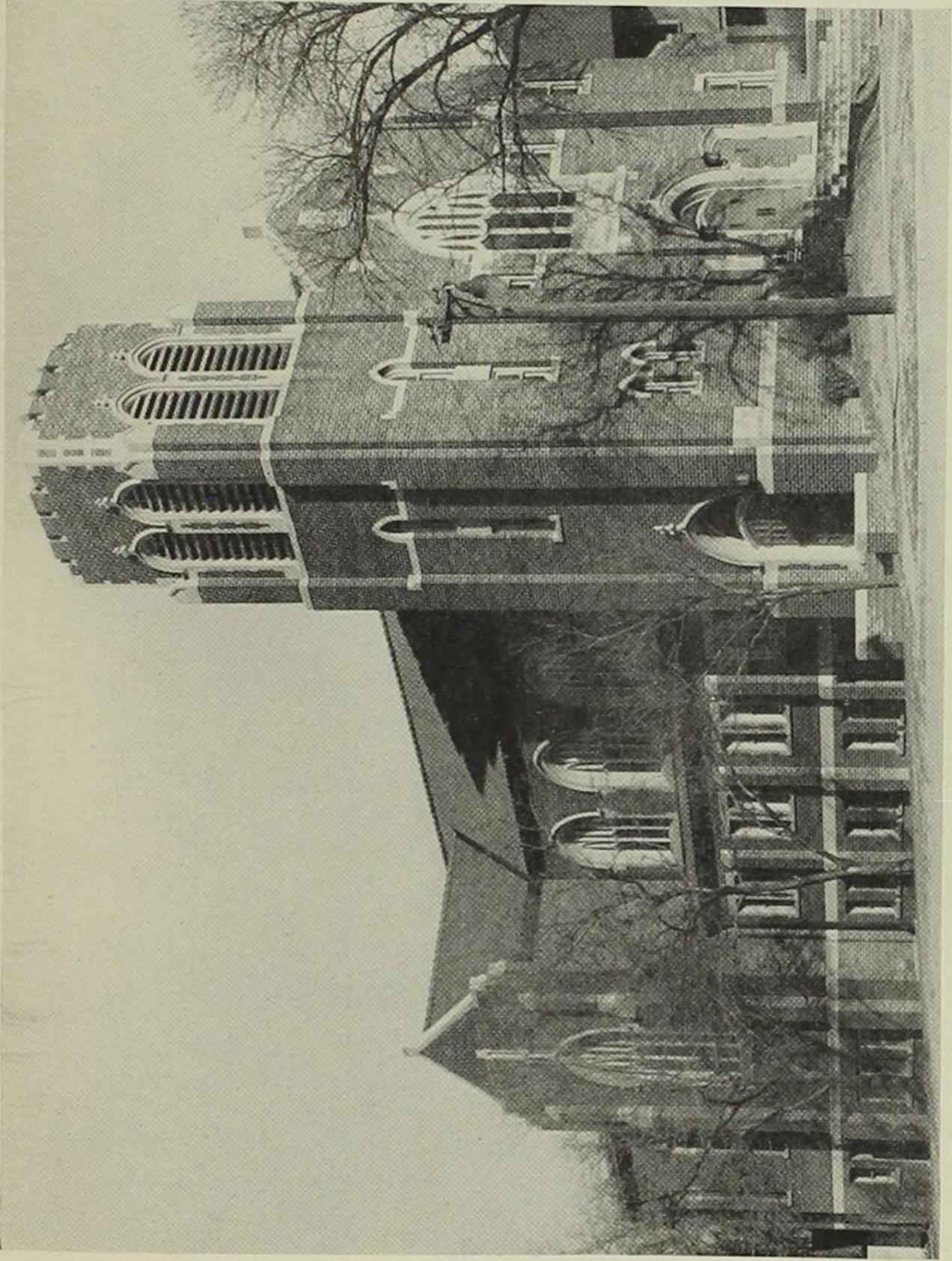
PIONEER CIRCUIT RIDER  
J. F. DOESCHER



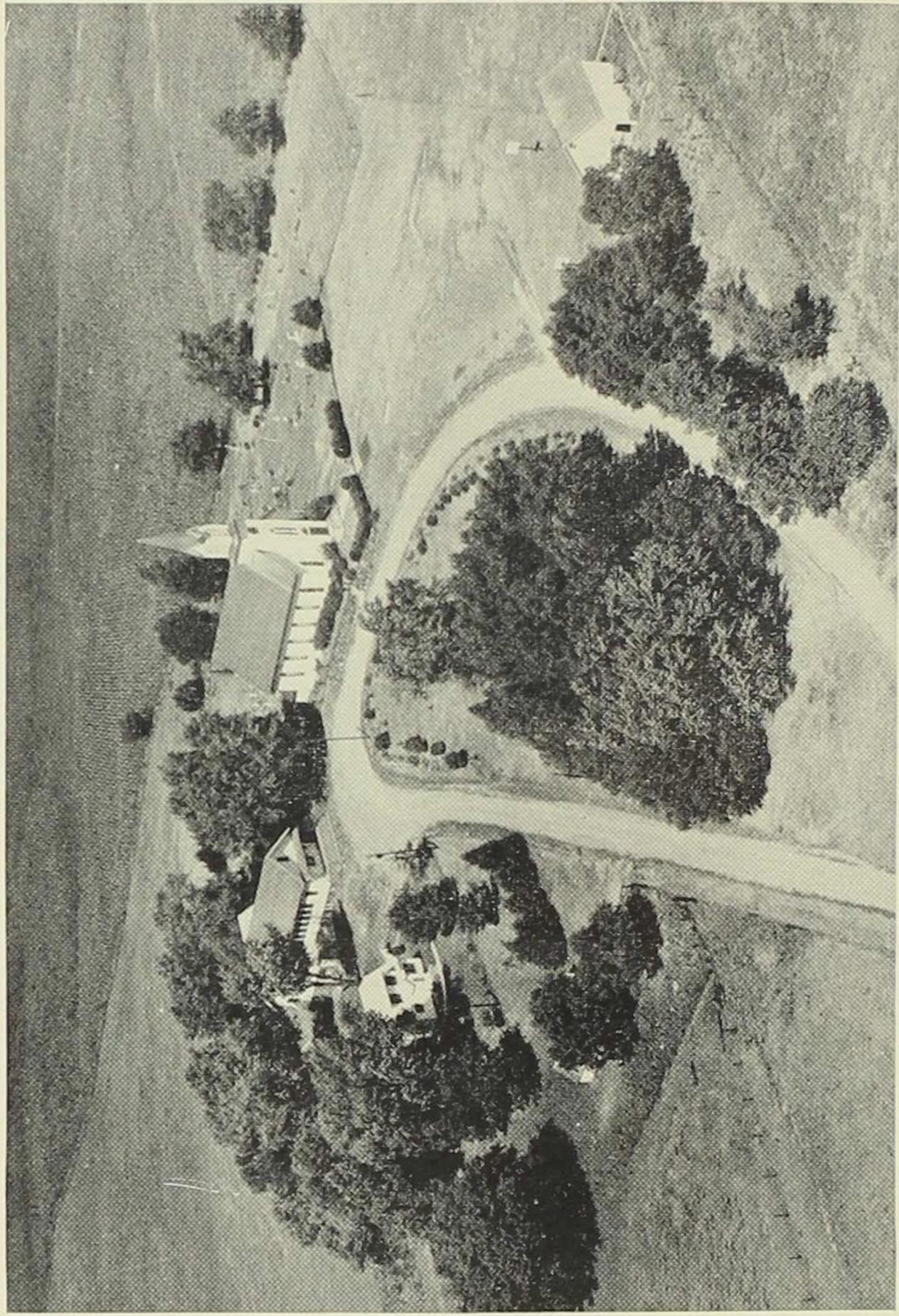
ST. PAUL'S AT FORT DODGE  
AD. SCHWIDDER, Pastor



STUDENT CHAPEL AND PARSONAGE AT AMES.  
MARTIN MUELLER, Pastor



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH AT DENISON  
C. W. SCHMIDT, Pastor



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, SCHOOL, AND TEACHERAGE NEAR BOONE  
H. M. ZAGEL, Pastor

membership with the Missouri Synod at this initial session of the Iowa District. Twenty-one ministers, in addition to the pastors of the above named congregations, attended this organizational meeting. Only two Iowa pastors failed to appear at the convention. Three Lutheran Christian Day School teachers — Mr. F. Assmussen of Waterloo, Mr. J. P. Rademacher of Fort Dodge, and Mr. H. Steuber of Luzerne — were present throughout the sessions.

In addition to the lay delegates, the secretary carefully noted twenty-three male guests present from various congregations of the District. According to the constitution only voting members of the Missouri Synod may cast ballots and decide the business of the sessions. On the other hand, any communicant member of the Synod may join in the discussion of issues as they are presented on the floor of the convention. As members of the Synod within the Iowa District these twenty-three guests had the right to participate in the discussions.

Doctor C. F. W. Walther appeared as the honored guest at the initial meeting. Professor Walther spoke on the subject, "Some of the Chief Obligations of a District that Desires to Use the Name of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod." Opportunity for discussion was granted after the

several sections of his essay were presented. Occasion for debate or discussion of essays has always been provided in order to develop unity of faith and practice in the church-body. The essayist's work, if acceptable to the delegates, is then adopted by the convention as its own and incorporated with its official proceedings either in whole or in part.

Dr. Walther's essay almost failed to arrive at Fort Dodge. En route to the convention, he left his briefcase on his train seat while he chatted with the rest of the delegates in the smoker. When a mother who had occupied the seat with her child left the train, a "helpful" conductor set the dilapidated satchel down on the platform behind her. Fortunately, one of the delegates noticed it, and it was retrieved by the Rev. Dornseif, who, running at top speed, was able to catch the last coach. The entire episode was later set to German verse by the Rev. H. Rottmann.

The officers elected at this first meeting of the Iowa District were: President, Rev. L. J. Craemer of St. Paul's Church, Fort Dodge; Vice-President, Rev. Theodore Braeuer of Immanuel Church, Maxfield Township; Secretary, Rev. J. Fackler of St. John's Church, Lyons; Treasurer, Mr. J. P. Rademacher of St. Paul's School, Fort Dodge.

Originally it was the duty of the District president to visit all congregations, become personally acquainted with the work of the District, and assist in unifying the efforts of the various parishes. This was not too difficult at first, for in 1879 the Iowa District contained 43 pastors; 18 congregations who were members of the Synod; 54 congregations who were not affiliated with the Synod; 38 preaching stations; and 37 Christian Day Schools. Later, as the number of churches and ministers increased, the District was divided into several visiting circuits, and the conventions elected pastors as Visitors to continue this supervisory work among the congregations.

The Iowa District has enjoyed a phenomenal growth since 1879. At the celebration of the Silver Anniversary in 1904, the number of pastors had grown to 112; when the District observed its Golden Anniversary in 1929, the number had increased to 162. Seven years later, in 1936, when the Missouri Synod divided Iowa into two Districts, there were 189 pastors. In 1946, there were 216 pastors of the Missouri Synod in the Hawkeye State, a growth of 502 per cent over the number at the time of the organization of the Iowa District in 1879.

Equally striking is the growth in the number of Missouri Synod churches, which soared from 28

in 1879 to 78 in 1904. At the Golden Anniversary of the Iowa District, 153 congregations responded to the roll call, a number which increased to 188 at the time of the creation of Iowa District East and Iowa District West in 1936. A decade later, in 1946, there were 229 Iowa churches affiliated with the Missouri Synod as voting members, representing a growth of 871 per cent in the number of congregations since the Iowa District was organized in 1879.

In the beginning, the Iowa District committed the various phases of its work to special committees. The size and number of these committees increased with the growth of the District. In 1933 all of the work of the Iowa District was placed under the supervision of a Board of Directors, and following the division of the old District into Iowa District East and Iowa District West in 1936 this method of administration was continued.

The congregations of the Missouri Synod have been very active in the field of Christian education, especially on the elementary level. Pastor Doescher, for example, took charge of a church-school which his wife taught during his absence as a circuit rider. Throughout the pioneer period, pastors founded and taught parish schools. There were very few exceptions to this rule. In 1879,

thirty-seven of the forty-three pastors served in the classroom, thus fostering as teachers the cause of Christian education on the elementary level in the schools of the District.

In 1904 eighty-five of the 112 pastors in Iowa taught parish schools. It is not known how many of these men actually taught every day. At that time all types of schools were lumped together in one figure. It was not until 1919 that a distinction was made between the Christian Day School, Sunday School, Saturday School, and Summer School. In that year, only twenty-three pastors were teaching daily in a full-time elementary schedule. By 1946 the number of pastor-teachers had dropped to four.

With the exit of the pastors from the school-room, the number of male non-ministerial teachers increased. In 1879 there were three male teachers in the church-school system; by 1904 this figure had risen to 21 men and one woman. At the time of the Golden Anniversary there were 49 men, 26 women, and 6 students from the Seminaries teaching in parish schools. In 1946 there were 40 men and 38 women teachers, and in addition, there were four Teacher Seminary students and eight theological candidates assisting as teachers in the parish schools.

During World War I the language problem

forced many Missouri Synod parish schools to suspend operations. In 1919 the School Board committee reported to the Iowa District Convention that three schools were closed in one county. This same committee lamented the fact that pastors serving missions were no longer teaching parish schools. This trend was deplored even though it was acknowledged that it had become well established. The depression years of the 1930's also apparently affected the parish schools: not many were actually closed, but new schools were not founded during a period when many new churches were built. When congregations started to adopt such educational agencies as the Sunday School, the Saturday School, and the Summer School, the need for establishing a Christian Day School in every congregation was diminished.

With the passage of adverse legislation restricting the use of the German language in the teaching of secular subjects, the Iowa District appointed a special School Board to foster its cause. A School Superintendent was also elected to assist the congregations in educational matters and to put forth every effort to raise the standards of the schools. Many pastors and teachers returned to formal school training to acquire sufficient academic credit for State certificates. Resolutions were also passed urging the Missouri Synod to

raise the standards of its teacher colleges.

These years of conflict and reform brought about salutary results in the development of the Lutheran parochial school system. From 1921 to 1927, Pastor C. H. Seltz filled the office of School Superintendent. From 1928 until 1936, Mr. H. C. F. Mueller continued the work, serving the Iowa District West until 1945. Since 1936 and up to the present time, the cause of Christian education in the Iowa District East has been supervised by a member of the Board of Directors. This same arrangement has been followed by the Iowa District West since 1945.

The reports on parochial education presented at official sessions of the two Iowa Districts reveal increasing interest in teaching and training children in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Pastors and teachers regularly gave consideration to this matter at their meetings. The number of people assisting in Christian education in the several parishes steadily increased. Greater attention was given to teacher-training. Institutes for Sunday School teachers became a regular feature in the program of the Church. In this manner the Missouri Synod's two Districts in Iowa continued the tradition of giving thorough consideration and attention to the cause of Christian education.

From its inception the Iowa District has supported a mission program. A special Board was elected to explore possible territories and send pastors to organize parishes. Workers were engaged and congregations assisted out of a special Mission Fund raised by the congregations of the District. In 1904 the Mission Board helped support 27 missions including twenty workers by raising approximately \$5,000. At the time of the Golden Anniversary in 1929, the District contributed \$20,902.66 toward the support of 44 missions, including 32 pastors, one student, and three teachers. In 1936, when the original Iowa District was divided into Iowa Districts East and West, 55 missions received assistance from the Mission Fund. In 1946 the two Districts combined contributed \$51,242.56 toward the support of 42 pastors, three schools, three student-pastors, and a number of Theological Seminary students who did summer field work.

The Iowa District followed a certain procedure in administering its mission program. The missionaries, or later the congregations and the pastors serving the missions, would indicate their needs to the District. During the sessions of the District a committee would meet to consider the requests, and counsel with the pastors and delegates from the congregations desiring help. This



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHAPEL AT IOWA CITY  
JOHN F. CHOITZ, Pastor

PRESIDENTS OF IOWA  
DISTRICT EAST

PRESIDENT IOWA  
DISTRICT WEST



HERMAN HARMS  
(1936-1939)

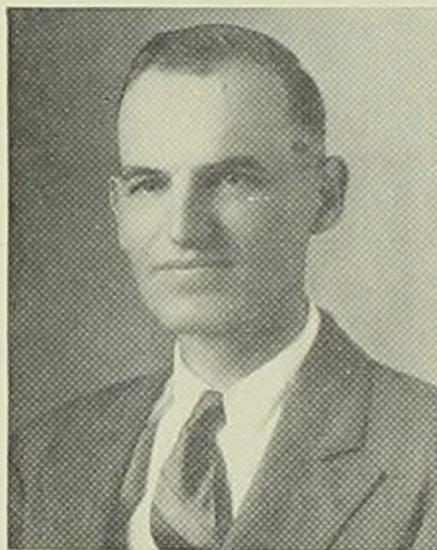


CARL HESSE  
(1939-1948)



AD. SCHWIDDER  
(1936-1945)

PRESIDENTS IOWA DISTRICT WEST



HERBERT BERNER  
(1945-1947)



THEO. HOEMANN  
(1947-1948)



C. W. LOBECK  
(1948- )

committee would then make recommendations to the District, which in turn would determine the degree of financial assistance to be given. The work of this committee absorbed a major portion of the time allotted for business at the conventions.

Although generous in its missionary work, the Iowa District was well aware that charity begins at home. It courageously undertook the support of needy pastors or their survivors through an ever-expanding social security program executed through their board of support. Since 1937 the Missouri Synod has adopted a pension system which eventually should make it unnecessary for the Iowa districts to continue this work.

In 1891 a building loan fund known as a Church Extension Fund was established in the Iowa District to assist needy congregations. In 1948 its assets were computed in six figures. Many a small congregation would still be suffering under make-shift arrangements if the Church Extension Fund did not exist and the congregations were dependent upon their own resources.

The Iowa District also created a special fund to assist worthy young men who desired to become ministers and teachers. At one time (1929) as many as seventy students were subsidized; in 1946 only fifteen students received assistance.

Since 1901 the work of finding homes for orphaned children was undertaken by a special organization known as the "Lutheran Home-Finding Society of Iowa." Eventually this Society established headquarters in Fort Dodge where, in 1930, a building was completed to meet all State requirements for this type of charitable undertaking. Since its founding, the Lutheran Home-Finding Society has cared for more than 800 children. The following pastors have served as Superintendents: C. H. Seltz, H. C. Koepke, and Walter H. Becker — the latter since 1925.

Funds to maintain the Home and its work are raised outside of the actual budget of the Iowa District by the membership of the Society and by special collections among the congregations of the District. The Lutheran people of Iowa affiliated with the Missouri Synod were among the first in this type of charitable work. The Iowa organization was the fourth to be founded for homeless children in the Missouri Synod.

Many churches had youth societies, but it was not until 1920, at a convention in Boone, that a majority of these societies joined the Walther League. This is an autonomous organization whose membership is gathered from the congregations allied with the Missouri Synod. The Iowa District officially espoused youth work in 1924. In

1946 nearly 200 Iowa societies held membership in the Walther League, and all were actively engaged in promoting such youth work as Bible classes, lecture-discussion periods, social functions, and summer camps.

In 1924 the Reverend Julius A. Friedrich went to Iowa City to serve the Lutheran students at the State University of Iowa. Friedrich was the first college student-pastor in the Iowa District. Today the Reverend John F. Choitz presides over the University student center and chapel. In 1940 the Church established a Lutheran student center at Iowa State College in Ames, where the Reverend Martin H. Mueller has served for the past eight years. In 1942 the Reverend Edgar Brammer became the first resident student-pastor for Lutheran students at Iowa State Teachers College at Cedar Falls. Such centers are important since one-half of Iowa's college students attend the three state schools.

Prior to these dates the Iowa District cared for Lutheran college students by providing special bus service to the nearest congregations. Neighboring pastors conducted services and Bible classes from time to time on the several campuses. When the National Lutheran Education Association (organized to foster the cause of Christian education) disbanded, it diverted a large portion

of its funds into Student Service Work. This substantial assistance calls for special recognition. Part-time work is being done at all the other colleges throughout the State by various pastors of the Districts. The work which began in so modest a manner in 1924 has grown to large proportions, and has prospects of continued expansion. When the building program at Cedar Falls is completed, the Missouri Synod will have three of the finest, completely-equipped, student-centers in the entire Church.

Education, missions, orphanages, and student-centers caused church work to grow to such proportions in the old Iowa District that in 1936 the State was divided into two Districts, Iowa District East and Iowa District West, each having its own set of officers.

A phase of work that developed rapidly after the division of the Iowa District is the area of service to the sick at various Iowa institutions. In Iowa City a full-time hospital chaplain has been serving since 1936; before that time this position had called for part-time help for twelve years. In Sioux City and Cherokee the Iowa District West has two pastors who are devoting their time entirely to those who have been committed to institutions. In the Iowa District East there is another full-time chaplain in the Veterans Hos-

pital at Knoxville. A total of twenty-nine institutions are served by the pastors of the two Districts of the Missouri Synod in Iowa.

Attention should be called to two lay organizations which have arisen since the State was divided into two Districts, and which have contributed much to the work of the Church. They are the Lutheran Woman's Missionary League and the Lutheran Laymen's League. In the Iowa District East the Lutheran Woman's Missionary League was organized in May, 1942. By 1946 seventy-one ladies' organizations had joined the League and it had completed its first project of raising \$6,000 toward the building of a chapel at the Knoxville Mission. In that same year it launched its second undertaking, when it resolved to raise \$3,000 for orphanages in Germany to aid in housing displaced children who were victims of the recent war. In the Iowa District West the ladies did not organize until 1947. The League's purpose is to foster certain mission undertakings, and also to lend support in every way possible to these projects.

The Lutheran Laymen's League in the Iowa District East was organized in 1943 at Waterloo. It has held annual conventions, and has sponsored specific undertakings in the District, such as laymen's institutes on various subjects. In the Iowa

District West the Lutheran Laymen's League was organized in 1946 and held its first convention in 1947.

Aside from serving local needs, these lay organizations participate actively in the objectives of the national organization and give their financial support as well as some of their leaders to the fulfillment of the objectives of the larger organization. Two of the outstanding projects of the Lutheran Laymen's League on a national scale are the sponsorship of the International Lutheran Hour over national radio hook-ups, and the active support of the only Lutheran university in the Synod, Valparaiso University in Indiana.

The sound education of its clergymen is a key to the growth of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Of the eighteen separate Lutheran bodies in the United States, 97 per cent are in three groups, the United Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Conference, and the Synodical Conference, dominated by the Missouri Synod. In 1860 this Synod was scarcely represented in Iowa; in 1948 about one-third of all the Lutheran churches in the State were affiliated with the Missouri Synod.

L. C. WUERFFEL