

# Zion Lutheran Church Organized in 1851

## Church Parent of Other Groups In Early Days

Lutheran immigrants from central and southern Germany who settled in and near Mt. Pulaski during 1840 and the 11 years following, were the organizers of the Mount Pulaski Zion Evangelical Lutheran congregation. And, these early day settlers were first ministered to by itinerant pastors who conducted services in the homes. When the group had grown sufficiently in number and strength they organized a congregation and built their first church.

### The First Church—1851-1866

Members who contributed to the first building were: Frederick Dittus, Christian, Andrew and Jacob Danner, Henry Vonderlieth, Erhardt Stoll, George and John Mayer, George Meister, Jacob Starr, Gottlieb Seifert, Adam Bierlein, F. Grossbernt, Ernest Niedergesetz, John Weckel, F. Epting, H. Kreig, John Schahl, John and Frank Schick, Mrs. Catherine Brucker, Dietrich Suedmeier, and Rev. Schwalb, the organizer and first pastor of the congregation.

Rev. Gemminger succeeded Rev. Schwalb, but he, too, served the congregation for a limited time only.

Rev. O. Steiger came to Mt. Pulaski in 1856 to serve as pastor of this congregation. He also conducted the Christian Day School. It was during his pastorate that the first pipe organ was purchased. Rev. O. Steiger resigned in 1863 and again the congregation was without a pastor.

During the vacancy following Rev. Steiger's resignation, the congregation applied for membership in the Illinois Synod, then a member of the General Synod. As soon as the congregation applied for membership, they requested the help of Synod in obtaining a pastor. Accordingly, Rev. Carl Bode, pastor of a Lutheran Congregation in Syracuse, New York, was recommended.

Rev. Carl Bode accepted the call and was installed March 3, 1864. Under Rev. Bode's leadership the congregation grew rapidly in number and wealth. At the convention of the Illinois Synod in August 1864, the Mt. Pulaski congregation was accepted as a member. The congregational report at this Synodical Convention included the following statistics: Baptism, 34; Confirmed, 18; Communicant Members, 139; Voting Members, 85; Sunday School, 11 teachers and 103 pupils; Christian Day School 36. At this time the first choir was organized and Mt. Pulaski was a thriving congregation.

### The Second House of Worship 1866-1910

By the end of the calendar year 1864 the congregation had grown to such an extent that the church could accommodate hardly half the crowd that came to attend the Christmas Eve Program. It was at this program that the gift was received which engendered a building fund for a new church. A gift of \$10.00 to be used for some church purpose was given to the pastor by a man in the audience. The overcrowded building and this gift inspired the Pastor to suggest the building of a new church or enlarging the old one. The project was discussed at the congregational meeting in January. It was decided to deposit the \$10.00 gift in a building fund to finance the building of a new church or to enlarge the old one. At the March meeting of the same year the congregation resolved to build a new church and \$1200.00 were immediately subscribed by the members present. The building committee elected consisted of John Weckel, Adam Schafer, and George Huck.

The old building, which is no

longer in existence, was sold to the newly organized Catholic organization for \$600.00. Two lots in the northwest corner of the same block, at the corner of Cooke and Vine Streets, were purchased for \$50.00. The present building is located on this same site. The corner stone for the frame building, 34 by 50 feet, was laid Sept. 20, 1865. By this time \$3,403.00 had been subscribed, some from people outside the congregation. On February 11, 1866 the new church was dedicated. The entire cost of the new edifice was \$5,825.66, which included the cost of the bell, \$346.34.

About this same time there was a break in the Synod in which the Mt. Pulaski Congregation belonged. In fact, the Mt. Pulaski Congregation was host to the Synod of Illinois when the rupture occurred.

About a year later a split in this congregation arose following the Synodical rupture. The local disagreement concerned lodge membership, the use of wine in communion, and other unlutheran practices. In 1868 16 members severed their connections with the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church and organized the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is affiliated with the United Lutheran Church.

The following year, in 1869, Rev. Bode resigned from the pastorate of the Mt. Pulaski Zion Lutheran Church.

Rev. Kern succeeded Rev. Bode in 1869 to remain with the congregation only a short period. During his brief stay, however, he opened a mission station in West Lincoln Township near Lincoln. He held services for this mission in the Rothchild school house about three or four miles west of the city of Lincoln. After one year in Mt. Pulaski he resigned.

Rev. John T. Boetticher was installed on Sept. 4, 1870 at Mt. Pulaski, following Rev. Kern.

On July 14, 1871 Rev. Herman Meyer arrived at the Mt. Pulaski parsonage from Germany to take over the West Lincoln Church. Another mission had been opened in the city of Lincoln in the same year that Rev. Boetticher came to Mt. Pulaski. In 1871 the newly organized congregation in West Lincoln Township united with the mission in Lincoln to organize the Zion Evangelical Church of Lincoln. Rev. Meyer remained as its first pastor. A number of the members of the Mt. Pulaski church, who lived near Lincoln, transferred their membership to the Lincoln Congregation, and so the second division of the Mt. Pulaski Congregation occurred.

In 1879, Zion Lutheran affiliated with the Luther Church, Missouri Synod.

Rev. Christian Holst came to Mt. Pulaski Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in November, 1889, from Horicon, Wisconsin where he had been pastor of a congregation. Shortly after his coming, a group of members who lived near Chestnut asked permission from the Mt. Pulaski Congregation to hold services in Chestnut. Their petition was granted, as well as, the services of Pastor Holst on the first Sunday of each month. They were also to have a student from Springfield Seminary to hold services every two weeks. In 1891, they asked and were granted permission to build a church. Then on April 24, 1892 they were released from the Mt. Pulaski Congregation upon their request and the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Chestnut, Illinois was founded.

The members who were released to organize the Chestnut Congregation were: George Schaffnacker, Sr., Jacob Volle, Michael Jr., John Rentschler, Henry Richner, Christine Richner, John Maxheimer, Fred Schaffnacker, George Schaffnacker, Jr., William Hagenbuch, Emil Buehler, Emma Lessman, Louis Buehler,

Catherine Roos, Christian Roos, Mathias Stoll, John Vetter, and Erhardt Stoll. This constituted the third and last division of the Mt. Pulaski Congregation.

Due to the fact that Rev. Holst had a large family, the parsonage proved to be too small. In May, 1890, the congregation decided to enlarge the parsonage by adding three rooms, but at the meeting held the following month they reconsidered and resolved to build a new parsonage. The old house was sold to Mrs.

E. A. Danner for \$350.00 and the new one built for \$2000.00.

### The Third and Present Church Edifice—1902

In the summer of 1901 a resolution was passed to build a new church. The building committee consisted of William Baumann, William Schweickhardt, and George Lachenmyer.

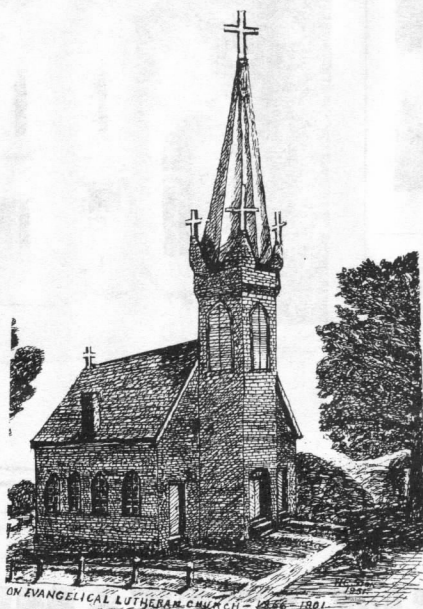
In September the contractors began removing the old church and excavating for the new church, which was built on the same site.

In the interim between the demolition of the old building and the completion of the new, services were held in the Unitarian Church then located on South Marion Street.

The new building is of Gothic design throughout with outside dimensions of 44 by 84 feet and a height of 51 feet. The spire was 110 feet high with brick work extending to a height of 60 feet. The structure was built of brick

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## ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH



OUR SECOND CHURCH

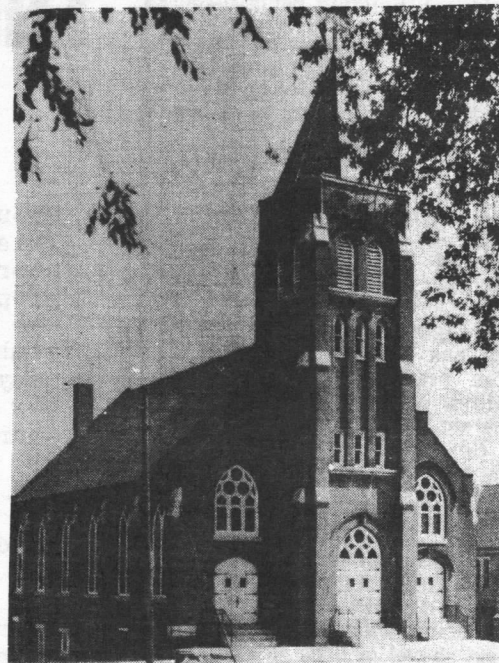
### OUR SECOND CHURCH

We are deeply conscious of the tremendous challenge that confronts the church in our complex modern society, highly mechanized and progressively more materialistic and secular.

With the help of the Triune God we are determined to more effectively bring "the whole Word of God to the whole of Man" and likewise, give motivation and direction that all Christians to be "A Light," "A Salt" and "A Leaven" in society.

Our prayer is that the new emerging community in our technological age be genuinely Christian.

### OUR THIRD CHURCH



### Our Present Church and New Educational Building

