

Lutherans
in
Berks County

Two Centuries of Continuous Organized
Church Life

1723

1923

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Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania
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BERKS COUNTY

BERKS county was the seventh county organized in the state of Pennsylvania. It was erected in 1752 when its northern boundary was the State of New York. Formed out of territory which formerly belonged to Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Chester counties it has since yielded its territory to form twelve other counties to the north. The population of this immense territory in 1752 has been estimated at 12,000.

The Germans were decidedly in the majority but when it came to the selection of a name it seems the English influence was strongest as the county was named after Berkshire in England, the home of William Penn.

The shape of the county is roughly that of a diamond and its area about 900 square miles. The land is of a rolling character, interspersed with hills and mountains, and intersected by numerous streams.

The Schuylkill river flows through the middle of the county, entering it about 10 miles west of the most northern point it flows south to the city of Reading and thence in a south-easterly direction where as it leaves the county it becomes the dividing line between Chester and Montgomery counties. Its branches resemble those of a tree flowing into it from the fertile valleys for which the county is noted.

The only city in the county is Reading with a population of more than 100,000. About the same number of inhabitants are scattered through the 44 townships, 22 boroughs, and 100 villages.

Thirty-four churches in the county antedated its erection in 1752. Montgomery says, "The Lutheran religion was predominant in the county, both with the Swedes and Germans to the east of the Schuylkill, and with the Germans to the west. Some of the Germans were of the Reformed religion. The churches built by these denominations were mostly 'union' churches."

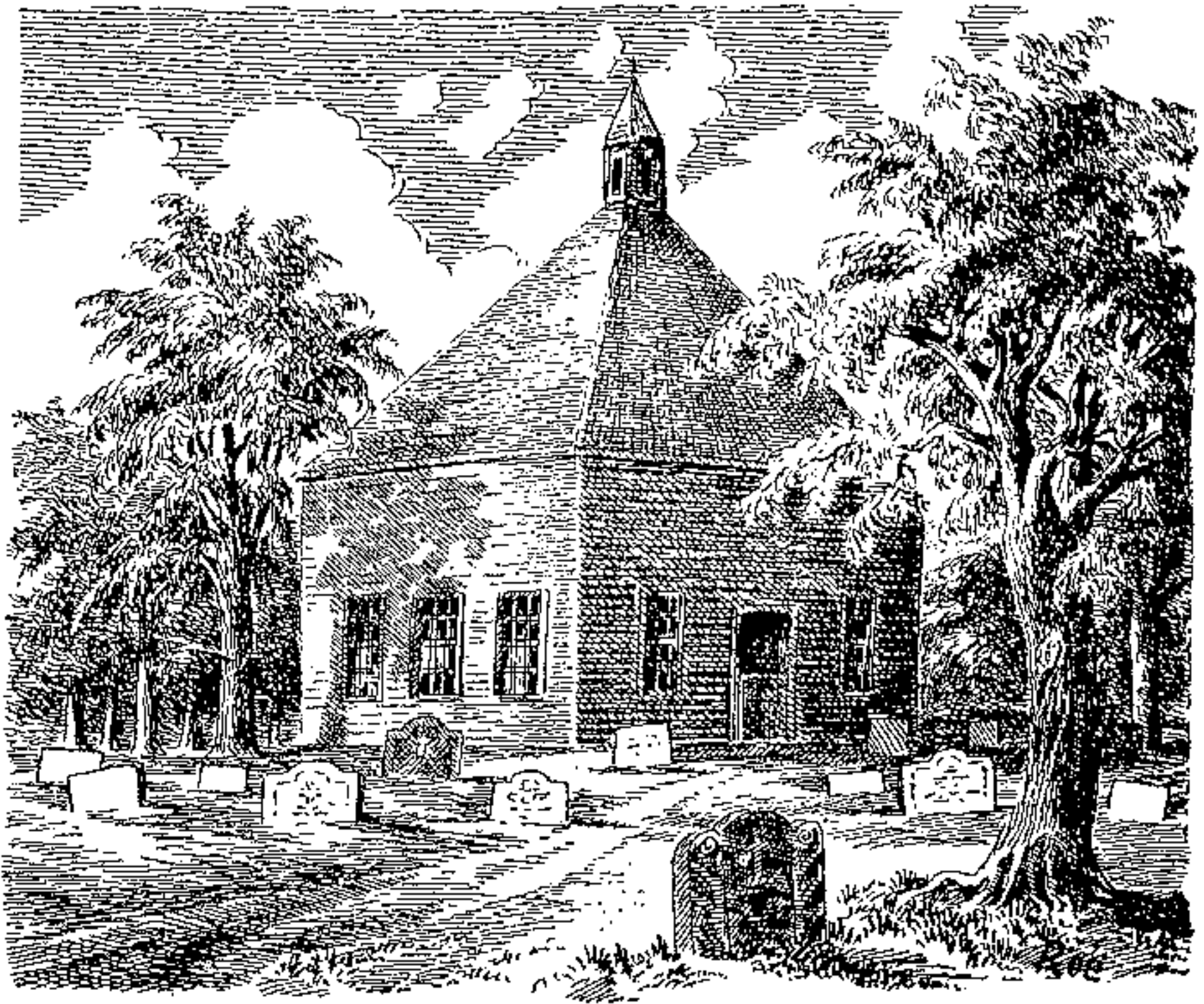
A BRIEF HISTORY OF LUTHERANS
IN BERKS COUNTY

BEFORE 1700, Lutherans within the present limits of Berks County attended church services at Falkner's Swamp. The first Lutheran Congregation north of Falkner's Swamp was begun by the Swedes, at Molatton (Douglassville), in 1701. Swedish pastors were sent here until 1742. In the meantime several other congregations sprang up on what is now Reading Conference territory. Accordingly Berks County Lutheranism has a continuous history of two centuries and a quarter.

The early church buildings in this vicinity were crude and uncomfortable. They were usually small log or stone structures. Tiles or shingles covered the roofs. Where there were floors other than the bare ground, they were of paved brick. The seats often consisted of logs laid in rows. There were no stoves. Their introduction into churches about 125 years ago aroused serious opposition. In spite of these discomforts, the services were very long. The sermon itself was unsatisfactory, unless it lasted 2 hours. When the preacher came, at intervals lasting from one to three months, the devout were very eager to hear the preached Word. Frequently he lined out the hymns and led the singing.

With the settlements of those days widely scattered, pastors had to come long distances to visit their small flocks. Sometimes they were the first to cut trails through the pathless wilderness, while going on foot or horseback from place to place. Minnig's Path was named after the pastor who came across the Blue Mountains for many years to meet his preaching appointments at Strausstown. Occasionally worshippers would come all the way from Lyken's Valley to attend services at Tulpehocken. Rev. U. P. Heilman, in "Our Church Paper", gives an account of a resident in Oley who was in the habit of walking to Philadelphia to church and back, on Sundays.

Soon after the twenty-three families from the Schoharie Valley arrived in the Tulpehocken region, in 1723,



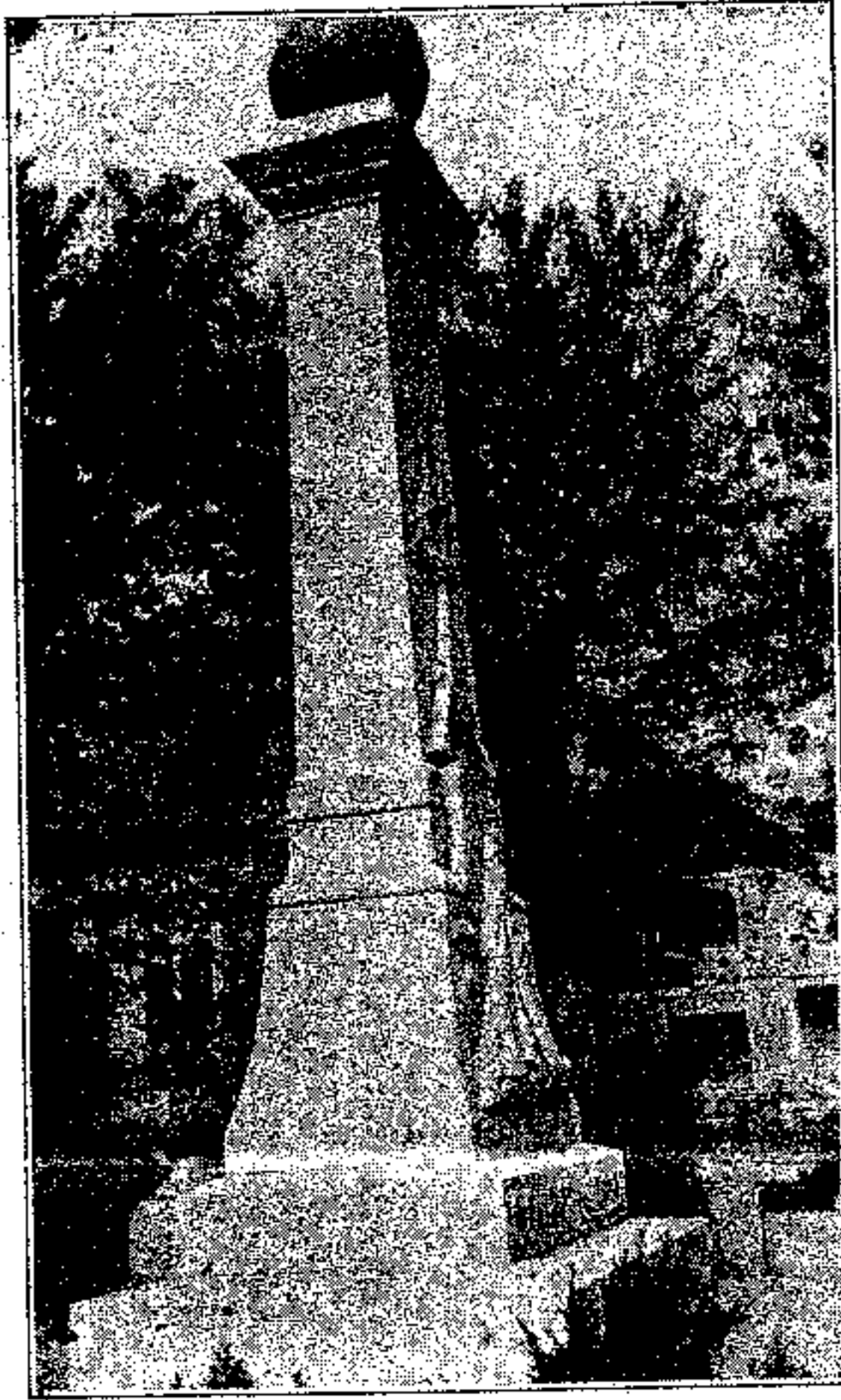
THE FIRST PALATINES' CHURCH AT NEWBURG, N. Y.

they decided to erect the Reed's church, which was complete in 1727. The piety of the early settler of Berks County was such as to call for immediate provisions for public worship, wherever a new community was established. From 1730 to 1750, the number of Lutheran congregations increased so rapidly that it was impossible to find enough suitable pastors for them all. While this eagerness for the preaching of the Gospel induced unworthy men to offer their services, it also appealed to devout ministers who came across the ocean to feed hungry souls with the bread of life. The firm foundations that enabled Berks County Lutheranism to weather the storms of centuries, without impeding its progress, were laid by European missionaries.

In 1728, John Casper Stoever, student of theology, and his son bearing the same name, but registering as a missionary, landed at Philadelphia. A year later the younger Stoever began his long career of gathering congregations, building churches, and starting church records. Among the congregations of Berks County founded by him, were: Little Tulpehocken, 1729; Hill, 1730; and Frieden's,

LUTHERANS IN BERKS COUNTY

Bernville, 1745. His work extended into Lebanon, Lancaster and York counties. He is reputed to have organized more congregations, during his 51 years in the ministry, than any other pastor of the Lutheran church in America.

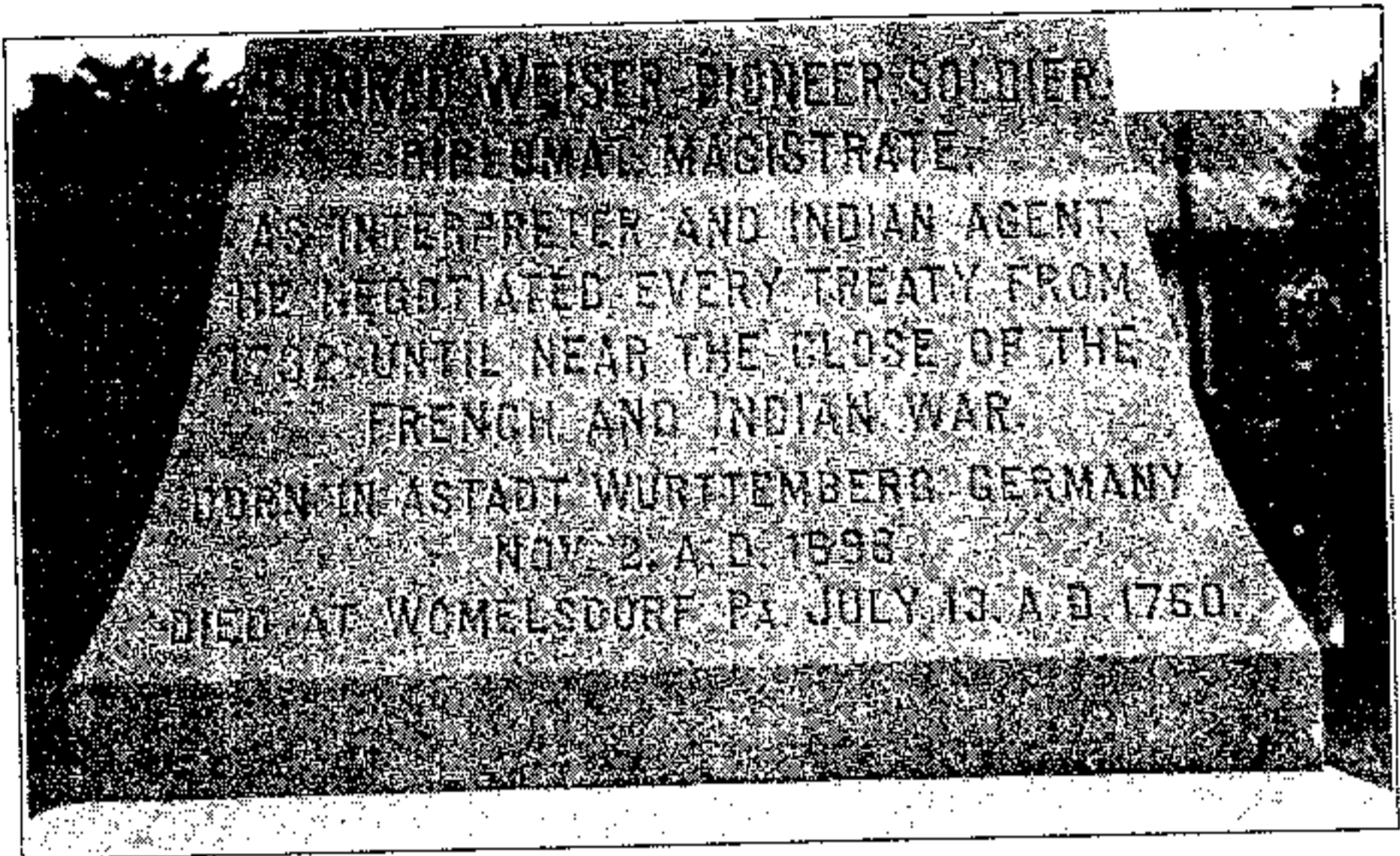


CONRAD WEISER MONUMENT AT WOMELSDORF

In response to the urgent appeals for pecuniary aid and pastoral oversight, Prof. Dr. Franke of Halle induced Dr. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg to embark for America, in 1742. As early as 1743 he visited Tulpehocken. Here he married, in 1745, Anna Marie, oldest daughter of Conrad Weiser. Thereby the life and family of the Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America became inseparably linked with the history of Berks County. Of this marriage he wrote: "The Lord hath regarded my prayers and granted me a young woman who is pure of heart, pious, unpretentious, meek and active". On Muhlenberg's arrival, there were, besides those churches already named,

LUTHERANS IN BERKS COUNTY

Lutheran congregations at Alsace, Schwartzwald, Moselem and Allemaengel.



BASE OF MONUMENT

Other missionaries who came from Halle through the influence of Muhlenberg, were J. Nicolas Kurtz, D. D., pastor of Tulpehocken 1746-62, and his brother William Kurtz who assisted him and later preached at Robeson; Christopher Em. Schultze, from 1771 to 1809, pastor of Tulpehocken, Rehrersburg, St. Daniel's, Womelsdorf, Bernville, Little Tulpehocken and Schaefferstown; John H. Schaum, from 1760 to 1778, pastor of Hill, Lobachsville, Moselem, Ontelaunee, Maxatawny, and Rockland where his remains lie buried; John Voigt, pastor of Hill church, 1765-85. Muhlenberg's high regard for Halle induced him to send his three sons across the Atlantic to be educated there. Two of these, Frederick A. and H. Ernst, appeared frequently in Lutheran pulpits throughout Berks county. The former organized the Ministerium of New York, in 1774. He afterwards entered politics and became the first speaker of the national House of Representatives.

With the founding of Trinity church, Reading, in 1752 began the practice of connecting country congregations to form a parish with the town church. Trinity itself continued this practice for fully a century. It was followed by St. James', St. John's, St. Luke's, and still obtains at St. Mark's and Hope. Since the early beginnings of these

and other congregations had their origin in Trinity, it is known in Reading as the mother church. During the first century of their existence Christ church, Tulpehocken, exceeded Trinity, Reading, in importance. In those days, it was the mother church. Through the missionary zeal of its early pastors many congregations have been established.

During the French and Indian War, church buildings along the frontier were at times used to store provisions and ammunitions. In a few instances there were port holes in the walls through which the approach of marauding savages was watched and checked by rifle shots. St. Paul's, in Windsor Township, apparently suffered from Indian depredations, which is an indication that it was used for military purposes. After the war, appeals were made from that section for aid to erect a new church. At this time there were, outside of the Tulpehocken region, churches at Belleman's, Dunkel's, New Bethel and Allemaengel. All these suffered great hardships and members of the latter two were massacred.

The churches that appeared in Berks County up to 1760 were with a very few exceptions altogether Lutheran or Reformed. About that time the Union church became the habit. During the succeeding half century nearly all the purely denominational churches were made union as far as property rights and maintenance were concerned. No doubt the hardships and privations incurred by the French and Indian War made this step necessary in many instances. Union edifices were erected, at Amityville, in 1753; Kutztown, 1755; St. Michael's, 1769; Wessnersville, 1770; Hamburg, 1770; Spies, 1774. A few of the stronger congregations, notably Atoher, Rehrersburg, and Christ, Stouchsburg, always remained distinctly Lutheran. The first century of Lutheran endeavor in Berks County has 30 congregations to its credit.

The American Revolution put a very serious check on the organization of new congregations and the building of new churches. The loyalty of the Lutheran church to the cause of the Colonies induced them to stake their all in the long struggle for liberty. Peter Muhlenberg, oldest

son of the Patriarch of the Lutheran church in America, was a major-general and a member of Washington's staff in the continental army. "The Lord of hosts heard the cries of the distressed, and sent an angel for their deliverance", exclaimed Muhlenberg while rejoicing over the victory at Trenton. But the political upheaval that swept his own sons from the ministry into public life greatly affected the entire church. The year 1790, however, marks the beginning of a great activity in the Lutheran churches of Berks County. Within a quarter of a century after that date almost every Lutheran congregation in the county either helped to erect, or by itself built, a new church. A number of the edifices of that period are still standing as monuments to the liberality and churchliness of the Lutherans in this section a century and a quarter ago.

The great stream of Lutheran immigration during the 18th century, and the consequent inability on the part of the Church to supply them everywhere with spiritual ministrations, exposed many of the early churches to impostors. In their eagerness for some one to supply them with the means of grace, the people frequently accepted the proffered services of these men whom Muhlenberg in his reports called "vagabond preachers". With the exceptions of Gerhard Henckel, Tobias Wagner and Daniel Shoemaker, these independents were uneducated men and frequently without character. They accomplished little good and often created disturbances. At times they had control of considerable sections of the county. Fully half a dozen of them, under the leadership of J. C. Andraee, had formed an organization in opposition to synod. Much of the independent attitude and aloofness still held against synod, is an aftermath of their influence. Individual independents ordained men to the ministry as late as 1866. Applications by men thus ordained for admission into synod were rejected.

The scarcity of pastors often made the exceedingly large parishes, for which Berks County was especially noted, a necessity. These extensive parishes invariably overlapped and frequently extended into neighboring counties. Many congregations in Berks were served by

pastors residing far beyond its borders. Rev. Daniel Shoemaker at one time served 16 or more congregations scattered over three counties. Rev. T. T. Jaeger, who died in 1888, was pastor or regular supply of no less than 25 congregations in the central and western parts of the county. Up to 1900, Rev. B. D. Zweizig served 10 congregations. Others at the same time included from 6 to 8 congregations in their parishes. Indeed the unwillingness to have more frequent services and to agree to divisions of large parishes has for a long time stood in the way of changes. But in the last 25 years very commendable progress has been made in making parishes smaller and more compact. This with the telephone and the automobile enables the pastor, who is willing to live within the bounds of his parish, to be of immediate service to any of his parishioners.

Many distinctions have been lavished on Berks County preachers. Having been educated men generally, there was an abundance of honorary degrees of almost every description conferred on them. Quite a few of them were called to professorships in colleges and theological seminaries. A number of them became noted authors. Some entered politics and acquired national fame. Of the seven Seniors of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in its long history, four were Berks County pastors. These were J. N. Kurtz, Christopher E. Schultze, William Beates and Jacob Fry. Besides these, C. F. Welden, G. F. Jaeger, Conrad Miller, Jacob Miller, John W. Richards, F. J. F. Schantz, E. T. Horn and M. C. Horine also served as presidents of the Ministerium.

Some of the most eminent ministers of the early Lutheran church in America took their brides from Berks county families. Muhlenberg's marriage to Anna Maria Weiser has been referred to. John Casper Stoeber was married to Catherine Merkel whose father, Christian Merkel, resided in Rockland. Rev. Dr. J. N. Kurtz took to wife Anna Elizabeth Seidel. Their youngest son was for many years the influential pastor of the Lutheran church at Baltimore. One of the daughters married Rev. Jacob Goering who was known as a great preacher.

The Lutheran congregations of Berks have given to the Church no less than 50 ministers. The first of these was John Andrew Schutze, who became governor of Pennsylvania. Among those who have spent all their years of service outside of the home county were: William M. Baum, D. D., born at Earlville, 1825, who served as president of the General Synod, 1873-5; Henry M. Bickel, D. D., born in Reading, 1827, pastor in Philadelphia and associate editor of the Lutheran and Lutheran Observer; S. A. K. Francis, D. D., born in Amity Township, 1839, pastor of Trinity church, Philadelphia, for nearly 50 years; Franklin S. Deitrich, born in Albany Township and died in India, 1889. Among the living are: Milton J. Bieber, D. D., Field Missionary in the Northwest; Levi F. Gruber, D. D., LL. D., St. Paul, Minn., author of "Creation ex Nihilo"; S. G. Trexler, D. D., President of the New York and New England Synod; A. L. Ramer, Ph. D., Superintendent of Slav Missions.

Fully one-third of the present pastors of the Reading Conference are natives of Berks. And twice that number are now laboring in the Lord's harvest field elsewhere. While the county is just about furnishing to the outside world the number of pastors that have come here from other localities, it will according to present prospects soon supply more preachers to the church than the Reading Conference itself needs. The prayers for more laborers in the Lord's harvest are being answered.

A number of prominent ministers of the Lutheran church, who had no charges in Berks County, resided here at intervals. Dr. A. R. Horne was principal of the Keystone State Normal School at Kutztown, 1872-77. Rev. Carl M. Jaeger, who served pastorates at Washington, Wilkesbarre, Pittsburg, Carlisle and Harrisburg, resided in Reading from 1869 to 1877. Frederick A. Muhlenberg, D. D., LL. D., great-grandson of H. M. Muhlenberg and grandson of Rev. J. H. Schaum, who was professor of Greek in the University of Pennsylvania and president of Muhlenberg and Thiel colleges, spent the last 8 years of his life

in Reading, 1893-1901. During this time he frequently preached in churches of this city and vicinity.

At least 4 languages, English, German, Swedish and French, were used in the Lutheran pulpits of Berks County. The last two named hardly endured beyond the middle of the 18th century. For more than a century, German was almost exclusively used at divine services by Lutheran congregations. The efforts to introduce English were in almost every instance bitterly contested. Serious opposition in church councils and divisions in congregations were often brought about by the language question. The city of Reading has a number of congregations that came into being through it. But gradually the English services gained the ascendancy. There is now no congregation in the conference whose services are all conducted in German. Approximately 75% of the churches have all services in English.

The churches throughout the city and county have been wisely located, with few exceptions. Fully half of them have a continuous history of more than three-quarters of a century. Some of the very oldest are still among the most vigorous. Here the unabating power of the Gospel is clearly evidenced. Berks County Lutherans have no serious country church problem. The few Lutheran churches that went out of existence here had insurmountable odds to contend with all through their history. The Molatton church fell into the hands of the Episcopalians. It is doubtful whether the Lutherans ever organized a congregation in the Episcopalian church, located long ago near Shillington, of which Hugh Jones gave them part ownership by bequest, in 1734. The small congregations that held forth at Womelsdorf, Strausstown and Pleasantville, could not long endure under the shadow of the older and stronger churches near by.

There are now 93 well established Lutheran churches in Berks County, with a total confirmed membership of 32,000. A more compact body of so large a number of Lutherans is hardly found in any other county in the United States.

The Reading Conference

THE oldest organization of Lutheran congregations in the United States is the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. At its organization meeting held in Philadelphia in 1748 Berks county as now constituted was represented by two congregations, viz: Christ church, Stouchsburg, and Frieden's, Bernville. As the Ministerium grew in the number of congregations and the territory covered by them, it became necessary to divide them into district conferences. These conferences were at first numbered. Berks county congregations, within whose bounds lay the geographical and numerical centre of the Ministerium, and the congregations of Schuylkill county formed the Third District Conference. The marvelous growth from ten congregations in 1748 to 574 congregations at the present time with a baptized membership of 250,000 was attended with great problems of proper division of the congregations into districts.

In 1893 upon the wise suggestion of Rev. Jacob Fry, D. D., then pastor of Trinity, Reading, the congregations were re-districted and named after the chief city of the district. Thus it happened, thirty years ago, that the Reading Conference came into existence with its territory corresponding with the county of Berks.

In 1894 the number of pastors belonging to the Reading Conference was twenty-eight with an estimated confirmed membership of about 23,000. To-day there are 35 pastors with 34 parishes comprising 86 congregations. Four Lutheran pastors with a total of seven congregations in Berks county do not yet belong to the Reading Conference as they were formerly connected with the General Synod. The number of baptized members is conservatively estimated at 50,000. The confirmed number 33,000. Property valuations amount to \$2,500,000 according to parochial reports but replacement values would increase this amount to about \$10,000,000. There is a total debt of less than \$150,000. The conference meets semi-annually, with the pastors and a layman from each parish as the accredited delegates. The present officers are the following: President, Rev. R. B. Lynch; Secretary, Rev. W. S. Dry; Treasurer, Rev. J. O. Schlenker.

PARISH REGISTER

Location	Congregation	Pastor	Confirmed	Officers and Teachers	Scholars
Muhlenberg Twp.	Alsace	O. E. Kistler	1190	70	750
Amityville	St. Paul's	H. B. Ritter	369	22	167
Friedensburg	Frieden's	H. B. Ritter	401	25	142
Pricetown	St. John's	H. B. Ritter	67	15	82
Bechtelsville	Trinity	W. E. Wenner	175	20	310
Bern Twp.	Bern	J. W. Bittner (Supply)	329	8	98
Birdsboro	St. Mark's	W. F. Deibert	470	35	330
Geigertown	St. James'	W. F. Deibert	116	14	108
Bowers	Trinity	W. F. Bond	147	14	147
Hereford	Huffs	W. F. Bond	557	25	175
Longswamp Twp.	Longswamp	W. F. Bond	508	20	140
Rockland Twp.	New Jerusalem	W. F. Bond	348	19	165
Boyertown	St. John's	A. M. Weber	1245	66	807
Bernville	Frieden's	L. R. Miller	146	8	75
N. Heidelberg Twp.		L. R. Miller	26	8	40
Centre Twp.	Belleman's	L. R. Miller	400	12	175
Tilden Twp.	St. Michael's	L. R. Miller	875	12	200
Greenwich Twp.	Bethel—Zion	J. O. Schlenker	346	8	80
Greenwich Twp.	New Jerusalem	J. O. Schlenker	188	6	80
Albany Twp.	New Bethel	J. O. Schlenker	130	8	75
Albany Twp.	Frieden's	J. O. Schlenker	180		
Hamburg	St. John's	R. E. Kern	683	39	451
Kutztown	St. John's	J. W. Bittner	592	18	360
Blandon	Maiden Creek	J. W. Bittner	210	8	106
Kutztown	Trinity	R. B. Lynch	349	18	190
Moselem	Zion	R. B. Lynch	244	10	85
Leesport	Trinity	E. E. Landis	119	7	50
Ontelaunee Twp.	St. John's	E. E. Landis	236	5	50
Bern Twp.	Epler's	E. E. Landis	128		
Muhlenberg Twp.	Hinnershitz	E. E. Landis	348	5	100
Maxatawny Twp.	Zion	W. S. Dry	340	12	200
Mertztown	St. Paul's	W. S. Dry	300	8	100
Richmond Twp.	St. Peter's	W. S. Dry	220	7	150
Alleghenyville	Allegheny's	C. G. Heffner	331	15	180
Mohnton	St. John's	C. G. Heffner	303	39	437
Gouglersville	Trinity	C. G. Heffner	238	17	185
Mt. Penn.	Faith	R. J. Heckman	131	19	150
Reading	Peace	R. J. Heckman	103	12	135
Reading	Grace	W. H. Myers	1080	52	550
Reading	Holy Spirit	C. G. Beck	553	45	560
Reading	Hope	H. W. Warmkessel	884	25	463
Pike Twp.	St. Joseph's	H. W. Warmkessel	836	18	124
Pike Twp.	St. Paul's	H. W. Warmkessel	190	10	84
Reading	St. James'	H. K. Lantz	567	45	350
Reading	St. Johannis	Ph. Kirchner	934	48	385
Reading	St. Luke's	W. A. Fluck	1510	62	810
Reading	St. Mark's	Dr. E. S. Brownmiller	679	31	425
		M. L. Brownmiller, Asst.			
Marion Twp.	Zion	Dr. E. S. Brownmiller	70	13	90
Alsace Twp.	Zion	Dr. E. S. Brownmiller	260		
Spring Twp.	Kissinger's	Dr. E. S. Brownmiller	65		
Oley Twp.	Christ	Dr. E. S. Brownmiller	270		
Reading	St. Paul's	M. H. Stettler	500	25	400
Reading	Trinity	Dr. E. P. Pfatteicher	1371	74	674
Oakbrook	Redeemer	H. E. Herman	60	15	150
W. Reading	Bethany	W. O. Laub	356	46	294
Cumru Twp.	Yocum's		282	32	176
Exeter Twp.	Schwartzwald	W. O. Laub	478		
Shalters	Salem		140		
Shillington	Grace	Corson C. Snyder	171	22	263
Robeson Twp.	Robeson	Corson C. Snyder	252	22	120
Gibraltar	St. John's	Corson C. Snyder	325	10	169
Shoemakersville	St. Luke's	Wm. K. Fisher	193	9	92
Perry Twp.	Zion	W. K. Fisher	397	11	90
Windsor Twp.	St. Paul's	W. K. Fisher	112	5	35
Lenhartsville	Frieden's	W. K. Fisher	118		42
Sinking Spring	St. John's	J. W. Lazarus	273	20	135
Wernersville	Trinity	J. W. Lazarus	104	18	110
Strausstown	Zion	I. W. Klick	389	27	250
Shartlesville	Frieden's	I. W. Klick	192	25	270
Rehrersburg	Trinity	I. W. Klick	90	12	140
Millersburg	Salem	I. W. Klick	136	15	160

PARISH REGISTER—(Continued)

Location	Congregation	Pastor	Confirmed	Officers and Teachers	Scholars
Jefferson Twp.	Christ	I. W. Klick	157		
Tulpehocken	St. Paul's	I. W. Klick	61	14	85
Stouchsburg	Christ	D. F. Longacre	290	7	40
Rehlersburg	Rehlersburg	D. F. Longacre	326	15	70
Newmanstown	Elias	D. F. Longacre	132	15	250
Milbach	St. Paul's	D. F. Longacre	48	2	20
Rockland Twp.	Christ	W. H. Kline	530	16	160
Fleetwood	St. Paul's	W. H. Kline	325	30	580
Topton	Trinity	W. H. Kline	208	22	220
Heidelberg Twp.	St. Daniel's	H. S. Kidd	766	18	75
Host	St. John's	H. S. Kidd	247	5	25
Robesonia	Trinity	H. S. Kidd	98	23	135
Womelsdorf	Zion	H. S. Kidd	367	27	200
Wyomissing	Atonement	J. L. Deaton	225	35	275
Calvary	Rosedale	J. L. Deaton (Supply)	128		
Albany Twp.	Jerusalem	A. O. Ebert	113	10	75
Mt. Actna	St. John's	A. E. Youse	96	13	36
Reading	St. Matthew's	Dr. W. C. Dunlap	624	41	400
Reading	St. Peter's	Dr. W. B. Smith	121	13	280
Reading	Christ	O. O. Leidich	95	17	115
Stony Creek	Bethany	O. O. Leidich	126	35	197
Lyons	St. Paul's	J. I. Hummer	60	17	160
Mohrsville	St. Timothy	J. I. Hummer	56	22	180
Bernville	St. Thomas	J. I. Hummer	178	28	170

The united congregations celebrated their One Hundredth Anniversary on Reformation Day, October 31, 1915. The weather was fine and the people gathered in large numbers.

A society for young people is in a flourishing condition.

The Rev. H. M. Schofer of Aristes, Pa., and his brother, the Rev. J. A. Schofer, of Baltic, Ohio, are sons of this church.

LONGSWAMP, LONGSWAMP TOWNSHIP

WHAT is now known as the Longswamp Union Church was exclusively Reformed for about 100 years. The present edifice of the two congregations is located on the northern slope of the South Mountains about half a mile south of Shamrock Station. The Little Lehigh River has its rise in this territory. A goodly number of settlers were in these regions as early as 1734. The first came from Oley to the southwest; and from Goshenhoppen to the southeast. Most of them were members of the Reformed Church.

Rev. W. A. Helffrich, D. D. states that originally the name of the congregation was the "Little Lehigh Church". Thus the Rev. Father Michael Schlatter, pioneer of the Reformed Church, mentions it as such in his records. However, the name "Longswamp", as now applied to the Church, was introduced as early as 1762. This name is said to have originated from the fact that along the whole length of "Toad Run" (Krottecrick), a small stream of water flowing eastward from near Topton along this ridge, until it empties into the Little Lehigh; the land was marshy, and so the swamp strip was called the "Longswamp". Another story goes that a number of people by the name of Long or Lang owned this swampy land, and was called therefore Long's Swamp. This name was naturally contracted to "Longswamp". The present name "Longsdale" would seem to justify such a supposition.

It is said that the congregation was organized in 1748. The first church stood near where the present toolhouse

stands in the cemetery. The building committee consisted of Joseph Biry and Samuel Burger or Borger. Among those who aided in the work were Leopold Greber, Theobald Carl, Jacob Fenstermacher, Peter Butz, Johannes Fried, Nico-



LONGSWAMP CHURCH

laus Schwartz, Nicolaus, David and Peter Mertz, Heinrich Bolinger, Christian Ruth, Philip Burger, Nicholas and Peter Keiser, Peter Walbert, Bernhard Fegeh, Heinrich Strickner, Jacob Lang, Heinrich Egner, David DeLong, Jacob Daniel, Yost H. Sassamanshausen who was said not

to have been a member, but contributed money and donated land. The church was built of logs, the interstices being filled with small blocks of wood and plastered over with clay. The seats were hewn planks. It is not stated whether the floor was of brick, of stone or the native earth. This building remained in use till 1791.

Preparations for a new church were made in 1790. There was some difference of opinion as to the proper location. This was finally decided according to an old Palatinate custom of the men throwing their hats to the point desired. The second church was placed somewhat further up the slope at a spot which lies within the present cemetery. The corner-stone was laid by Rev. Henry Haertzel or Huetzel on May 28, 1791. When completed it was also dedicated by him.

It was in this exclusively Reformed Church that the Longswamp Lutheran congregation was organized in 1817. At first for a given period the Lutherans paid a nominal rent. At the expiration of the term, the compact was renewed. When this was again to be renewed, a difference of opinion arose. Some of the Reformed themselves wanted the Lutherans admitted to equal rights. Others opposed it. The result of this feeling was that most of the Lutherans and a small number of the Reformed withdrew in 1837 and built a union church at Mertztown. Later the remaining Lutherans at Longswamp were given a right to the property and so the church became union.

In 1848, September 30th, and October 1st, the centennial was celebrated in this second edifice. It was the first one observed in the vicinity and was largely attended. The speakers were: Revs. Kessler, Eichenberg and S. K. Brobst.

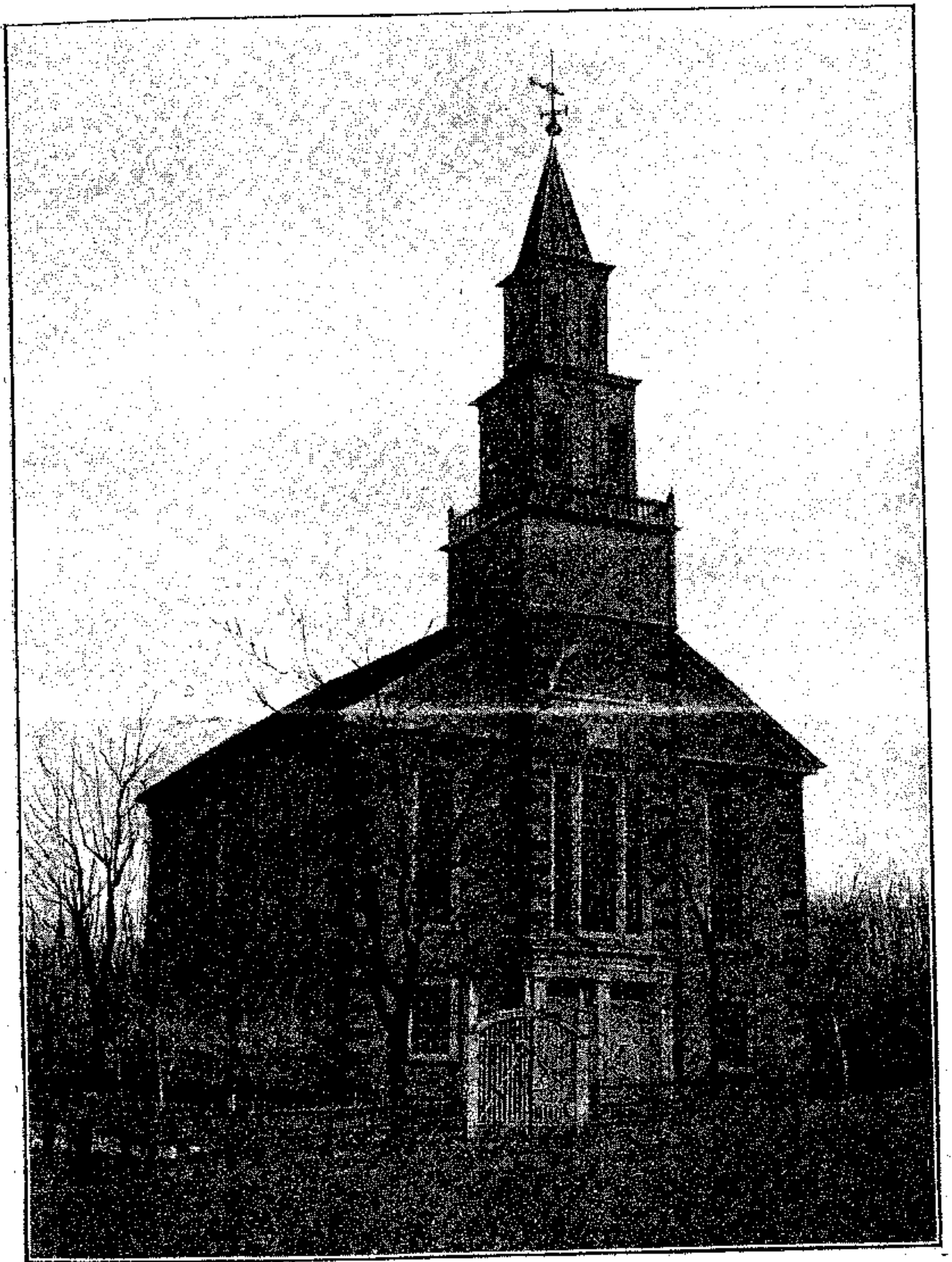
The present, substantial stone edifice was placed a little higher up the slope than either of the two former ones. In the early part of 1852 the building of a larger church was agitated. To test the feeling of the people, Rev. W. A. Helffrich, then a young man, was appointed to solicit subscriptions. In a few days it was ascertained that the necessary amount could be raised. Arrangements were made to begin the work at once, and to complete it before the end of the year. However, on May 5 and 6, the

Lord's Supper was once more celebrated in the old church. The work of demolition began on May 7. The contents of the corner-stone were found wasted. On May 9, 1852, the corner-stone of the new building was laid. The ministers who took part in this service were: Rev. Jeremiah Schindel, Lutheran; Rev. Augustus Dechant and Rev. W. A. Helffrich, D. D., Reformed. On Christmas, the church was dedicated. On this occasion Revs. J. Schindel, S. K. Brobst, G. A. Hinterleitner, D. D., Lutheran, and Erasmus Helffrich, and, though not mentioned, no doubt also W. A. Helffrich, D. D., Reformed, took part in the services.

The new and now union constitution, dated May 6th, 1852, provides in Article 4, that "The landed property belonging to this church and schoolhouse, which (land) was formerly taken up by the Reformed as an original grant (per Yost H. Sassamanhausen) and to which a section was added later by purchase, as also the church that is now being erected, shall be and remain a joint possession by the Lutherans as well as the Reformed for us and our posterity, etc."

The church is a large one-room edifice, without basement, excepting for the heating plant, with deep galleries on three sides, and has a pipe organ on the west facing the pulpit. The location is so elevated as to give a full view of the East Penn Valley spreading itself out east toward Allentown, north to the Blue Mountains and west toward Kutztown and Reading.

During the years 1911 and 1912 the house of God was remodeled to the extent of \$5,550. The improvements included a gasoline lighting plant, since changed to electric illumination, and a new steam-heating system. A substantial concrete wall surmounted with a churchly looking cement fence was erected around the churchyard. The high steeple was a constant expense and cause of anxiety. Vibrating with storms, it produced leaks in the roof over the pipe organ, and was several times struck by lightning. Thus it was decided that the steeple should be replaced with a short, broad, substantial tower. From this tower the call of the sonorous old bell can be heard even farther than from the former steeple. Art windows replaced those



BEFORE REMODELING

of clear glass. The large window in the pulpit recess was walled up and a fine painting of the Ascension now adorns the once open space. The Ladies' Aid Society presented a handsome brass altar rail. The whole edifice has been painted externally, and frescoed and painted internally.

The floors are covered with an excellent quality of carpet, and new pews furnish comfortable seats in the lower part of the church, and opera chairs in the galleries. The high ceiling, the long-type panel decorations and the proportions are all very pleasing. Best of all the acoustic properties are most excellent. The edifice has a capacity for 700 or more.

The rededicatory services were held on Whitsunday, May 26, 1912. The morning sermon was preached by Rev. J. F. Lambert, a classmate of the Lutheran pastor. The sermon in the afternoon was preached by Rev. George Stibitz, D. D., Professor in the Central Theological Reformed Seminary, at Dayton, Ohio. Rev. Frank P. Laros of Albur-tis, Pa., delivered the evening sermon. A dozen other pas-tors spoke at the Sunday School session and took part dur-ing the day.

There is a large and well regulated cemetery here, controlled by a board of trustees, elected by the two con-gregations. The congregations also own some 35 acres of land, much of it in timber. Each congregation has its own constitution modeled after the one recommended by its higher body.

Rev. William L. Meckstroth, is the present Reformed pastor.

The following is a list of Lutheran pastors:—Revs. Jacob Miller, D. D., 1817-1822; Conrad Miller, 1822-1831; Isaac Roeller, 1831-1837; C. A. Griebler, (candidate, li-censed in 1846) 1844-46; Jeremiah Schindel, 1847 or 8-1852; G. A. Hinterleitner, D. D., as supply, 1853-1857; Ferdinand Berkemeyer, 1857-1858 or 9; E. H. M. Sell, 1859-1861; Alfred DeLong Croll, 1862-1868, in April; Simon R. Boyer, from fall, 1868-1872; David Kidling Humbert, from fall of 1872-1903; Henry W. Warmkessel, assistant to Rev. Hum-bert for a few years. John William Early, supply 1903-4. William Franklin Bond, Nov. 1904 to---

cation a careless smoker dropped a match in the woods near-by where the horses were tied. In the conflagration that followed 17 horses perished and 22 vehicles were destroyed.

This is the third church building. The congregation was organized in 1769. Rev. Philip Jacob Michael, Reformed and Rev. Peter Mischler, Lutheran were the pastors. A log church was built that year. The property then consisted of nearly 6 acres of ground bought from John Schollenberger. Soon afterwards 46 acres more were bought. The first church stood on what is now known as the old cemetery, and was used until 1811.

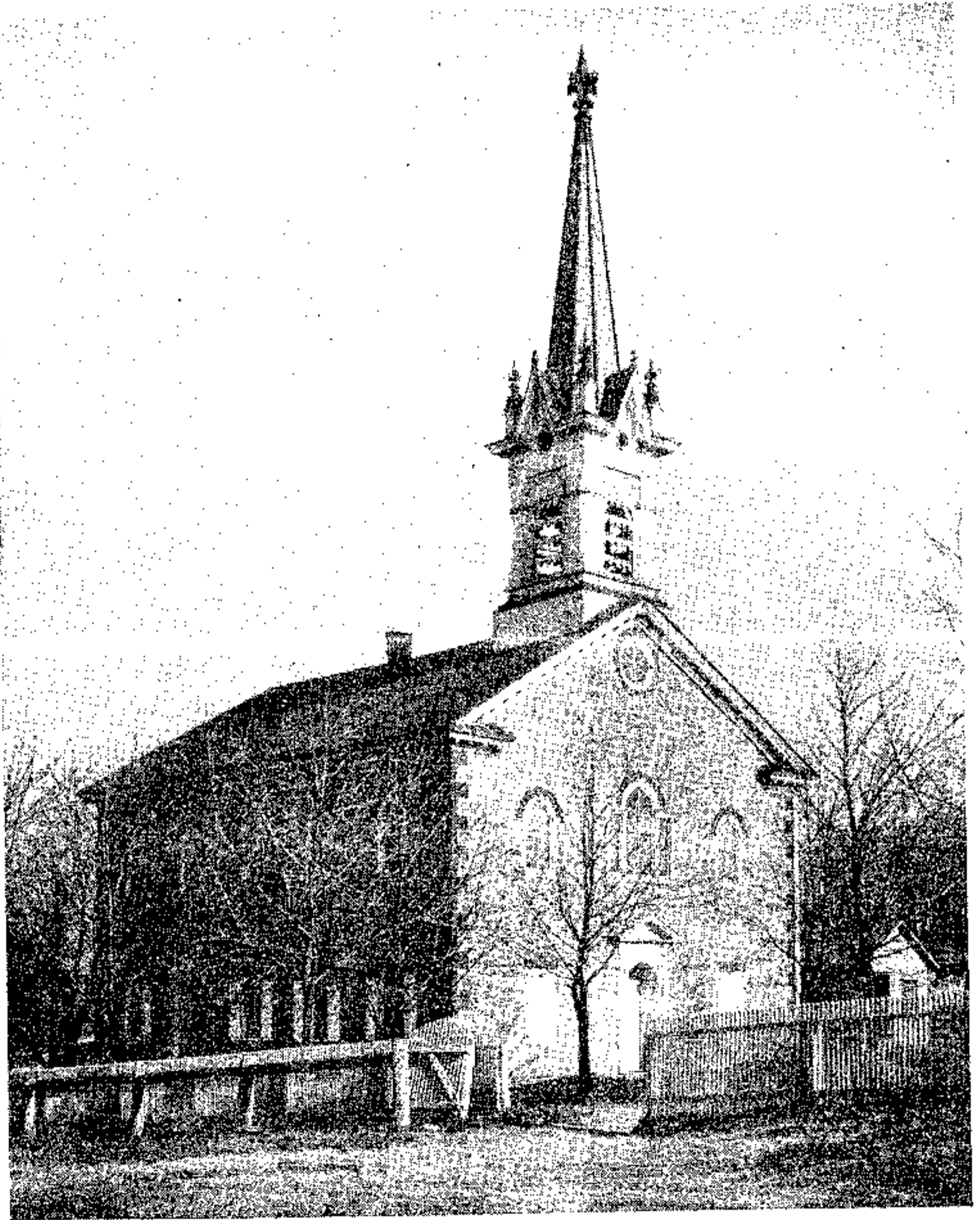
The corner-stone of the second church was laid on August 5th, 1810. In a very short time this brick building without a spire was completed at a cost of 1308 pounds. The church was dedicated with all debts paid and a handsome balance in the treasury.

The Lutheran pastors were:—Peter Mischler; Daniel Schomacher; Miller; Daniel Lehman; John Knoske; Marcus Harpel; Carl J. C. Schmidt; T. T. Jaeger; 1861-1900, Rev. B. D. Zweizig; 1901-1912, Rev. D. G. Gerberich; 1912 to---, present pastor, Rev. L. R. Miller.

NEW BETHEL ZION'S, GREENWICH TOWNSHIP

THE brave pioneers, driven from their fatherland by oppression, found a home in Pennsylvania. The Germans settling in the vicinity of Grimsville brought with them their Bibles, hymnbooks, and prayerbooks, and thus kept up the religion in the home. They had occasional services by traveling missionaries, among the earliest being Count Zinzendorf, who visited America in 1742 and preached to the settlers of this vicinity from the balcony of Levan's Mill at Eaglepoint. But these people soon realized, that to keep up their faith and properly transmit it to their children, they must have an organized congregation and a regular pastor to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, as well as instruct their children. In 1761, possibly before any effort was made to build a church, Rev. Daniel Schumacher, then pastor of Allemangel Church, now New Jerusalem's Church, near Wessners-

ville, confirmed a class of catechumens at Grimsville. In 1761, September 8, the fathers purchased two acres and four perches of ground from George Karns, for two pounds or nine dollars and seventy-two cents, for Church purposes.



NEW BETHEL ZIONS CHURCH

On this ground they built their first church. It was of stone. King George III was ruler of England and this country was a colony of England. The corner-stone of the church was laid May 18, 1761, hence 14 years before the Declaration of Independence. This first church was con-

separated on October 3, 1762 by Rev. H. Schaum. While the church was exclusively Lutheran and called "Bethel" church, the Reformed living in the vicinity were given the privilege to use the church for occasional services and bury their dead in the cemetery. On February 19, 1763, the congregation through their trustees, George Kamp and Christian Ungerer, purchased from Michael Smith fifty acres of land for fifty pounds or two hundred and forty-three dollars for school purposes. After the first church had served its purpose for 41 years, on account of the increase of the congregation and the dilapidated condition of the building, it was deemed necessary and advisable to build a new church.

The corner-stone was laid, on Whitmonday, May 30, 1803, by Rev. John Frederick Obenhauser, who was then the pastor. At this time the name was changed to "New Bethel Zion's" Lutheran Church and the same concession made to the Reformed 4 years ago was renewed.

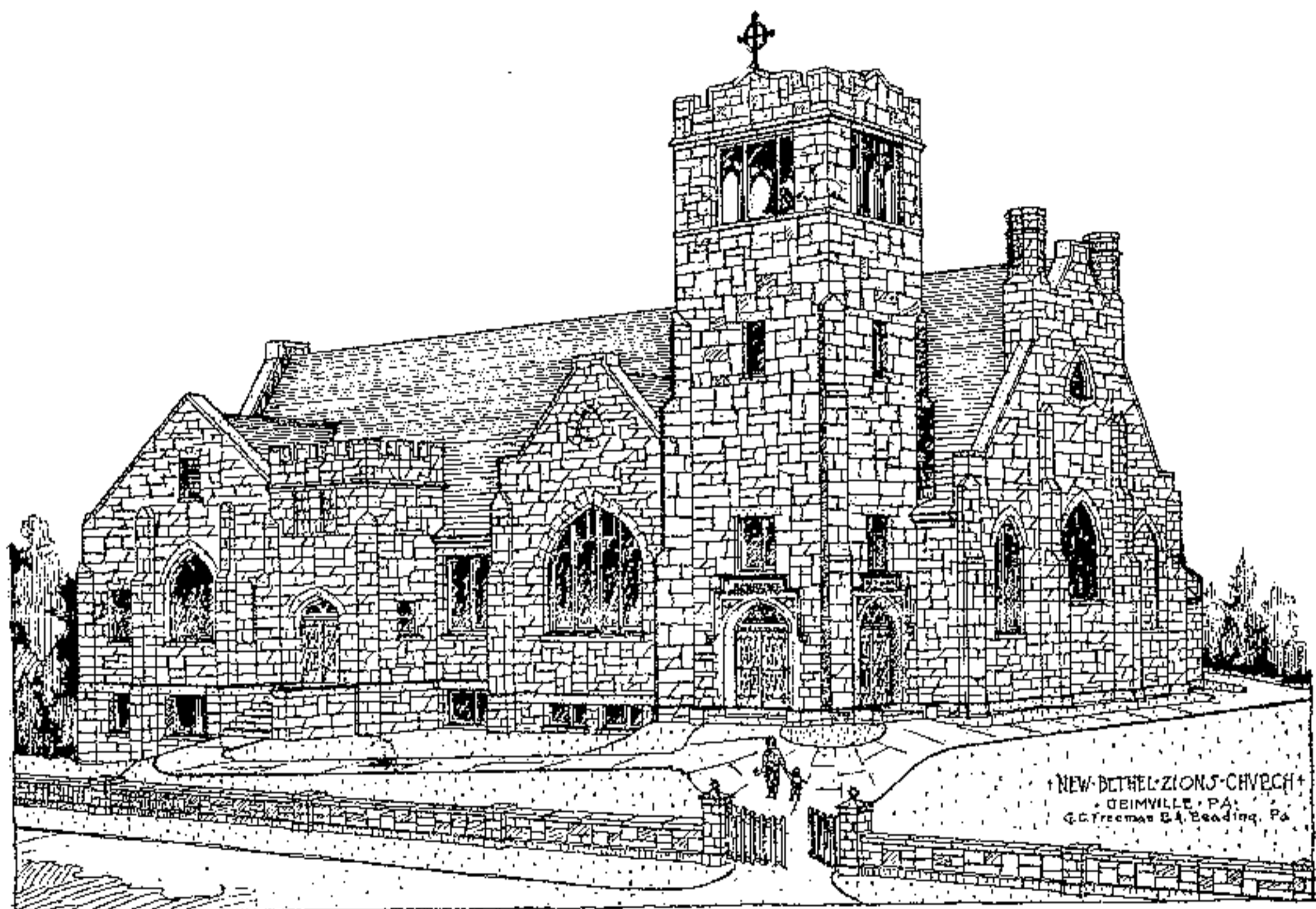
The new church, which stands today, was also built of stone and was finished in the short time of five months. This church was consecrated on the twenty-second Sunday after Trinity, November 6, 1803. The consecration took place when Thomas M. Kean was Governor of Pennsylvania. At the consecration, Rev. D. Geisenheiner preached the Lutheran sermon and Rev. H. Vonder Sloob, Reformed preached a second sermon, while the church was consecrated by the pastor, Rev. John Frederick Obenhausen. On Monday, November 7, the pastor preached. The building committee was composed of Michael Croll, John Derr, Heinrich Kohler and Andrew Kampf.

In 1844 after the congregation had existed for 83 years as exclusively Lutheran it was resolved to make it a union church. The Reformed were required to pay one hundred dollars for their rights to all the property and this amount was to be used for renovating the building. From this time, it became a union church with equal rights to Lutheran and Reformed.

On the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, September 22, 1861, while Rev. G. F. Jaeger was the Lutheran pastor and Rev. J. S. Herman, the Reformed, the congregation

celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of its organization. In the forenoon Rev. Thomas T. Jaeger, a son of the pastor preached the sermon. In the afternoon Rev. Daniel Brendel, Reformed, of Bethlehem, filled the pulpit.

In 1882 the church was thoroughly remodeled, a steeple built and a bell purchased. The cost of these improvements was over \$5,000.00. This was done during the pastorate of Rev. B. S. Smoll, Lutheran and Rev. J. S. Herman, Reformed.



NEW GRIMSVILLE CHURCH

September 13, 1903, the centennial of the erection of the present church building was celebrated. At this time, Rev. O. S. Scheirer was Lutheran pastor and Rev. R. S. Appel, Reformed. There were morning, afternoon and evening services when the following Lutheran ministers preached: Rev. C. C. Boyer, Ph. D., Rev. F. K. Bernd, Rev. D. D. Trexler, Rev. J. H. Raker; and Rev. Dr. Schoedler, Reformed, of Allentown.

In the early history of the congregation the records of the pastors are very imperfect. We know that Rev. Daniel Schumacher confirmed a class of catechumens in

1761. We know that Rev. H. Schaum was pastor when the first Church was consecrated in 1761. We know that Rev. John Friedrich Obenhassen laid the corner-stone of the second church in 1803. We know that Rev. Daniel Lehman and Rev. John Knoske were pastors but are unable to ascertain when their pastorates began and ended. From 1839 we have the correct data as follows:—

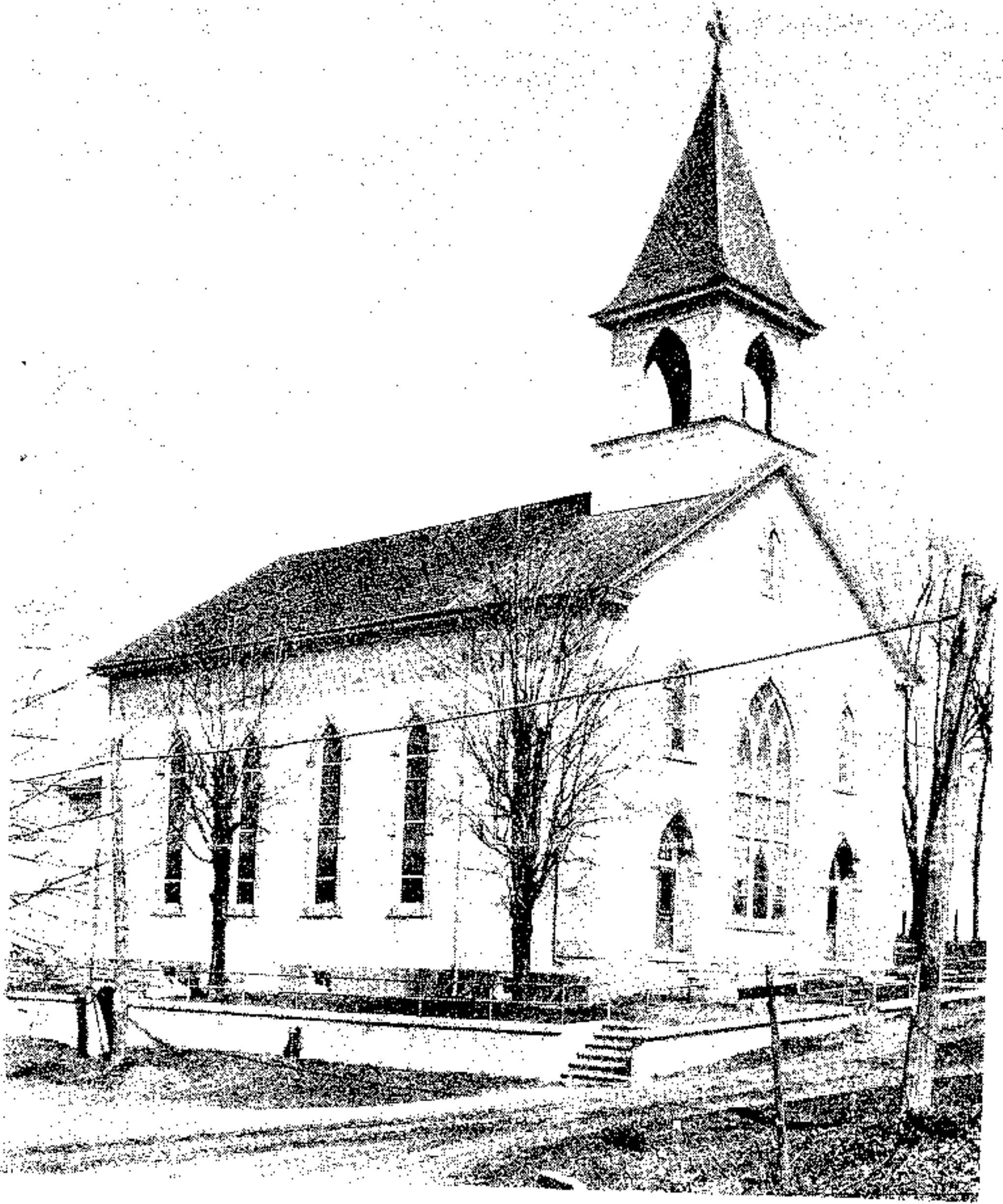
Revs. G. F. Jaeger, 1839-1873; B. S. Smoll, 1874-1890; F. K. Bernd, 1891-1896; O. S. Scheirer, 1896-1914; J. O. Schlenker, 1914 to---

The corner-stone of the new church was laid on July 22, 1923. The usual articles were placed in the stone. A very large number of people were present. The names of 1335 prsons who contributed \$1,746.50 were written on a record which was placed in the stone. The local pastor had charge of the service.

The Grimsville Parish is proud of the number of men it furnished for the Christian Ministry. It is a matter of regret that little more than their names can be given here. The following is the list:—Revs. D. K. Humbert, died at Bowers, September 21, 1913; D. D. Trexler, died at Bernville in 1914; Franklin S. Dietrich, a missionary to India, where (Dowlaiswaram) he made the supreme sacrifice on June 11, 1889; Edwin H. Smoll of the Schuylkill Haven Parish; J. O. Schlenker of the Grimsville Parish; W. F. Bond of Bowers Parish; A. L. Ramer, Ph. D., superintendent of the Immigrants Mission Board of the U. L. C.; Morris W. Krause of the Ringtown Parish.

NEW JERUSALEM, GREENWICH TOWNSHIP

IN THE year 1744, when Pennsylvania was still a colony of England and Greenwich Township was a part of Philadelphia County, a congregation was organized, near the Ontelaunee, by the German Reformed living in the community and a log church built. Mr. Conrad Koch presented about two acres of ground for this purpose. When this church was consecrated and whether it was given a specific name is not known, but it was known as the High German Reformed Church, "Dunkel Kirche" until



ST. DANIEL'S CHURCH NEAR ROBESONIA

ST. DANIEL'S, HEIDELBURG TOWNSHIP

THE Lutheran Congregation in Heidelberg Township, named St. Daniel's Church and locally known as "Corner Church," or "Eck Kirche," was founded about 1750. The church building is situated in the northern corner of a crossroad, about a mile northward of Robesonia.

The church received the name St. Daniel at the laying of the corner-stone of the second building in 1814. The designation "Corner" or "Eck" is said to have originated

not so much from the location of the building as from the fact that the corners of a number of farms center about the place. On May 30, 1751 the congregation came into possession of three adjoining tracts of land: One-half acre from John Artz, one-half acre from Michael Shower, and three-fourths acre from Abraham Lauck.

The land was received in trust for the congregation by John Beyer and Frederick Weiser, five shillings (about seventy-five cents) being paid for each tract. The deeds were acknowledged before Justice Conrad Weiser and the Declaration of Trust shows that the land was "to be for the benefit, use and behoof of the poor of the said Dutch Lutheran Congregation at Heidelberg aforesaid forever, and a place to erect a House of Religious Worship for the Use and Service of said Congregation and if occasion shall require, for a place to bury their Dead."

From 1773 to the present time nine additional purchases of land, at prices ranging from one dollar per acre to five hundred dollars per acre, have brought the total area of land to about 20 acres.

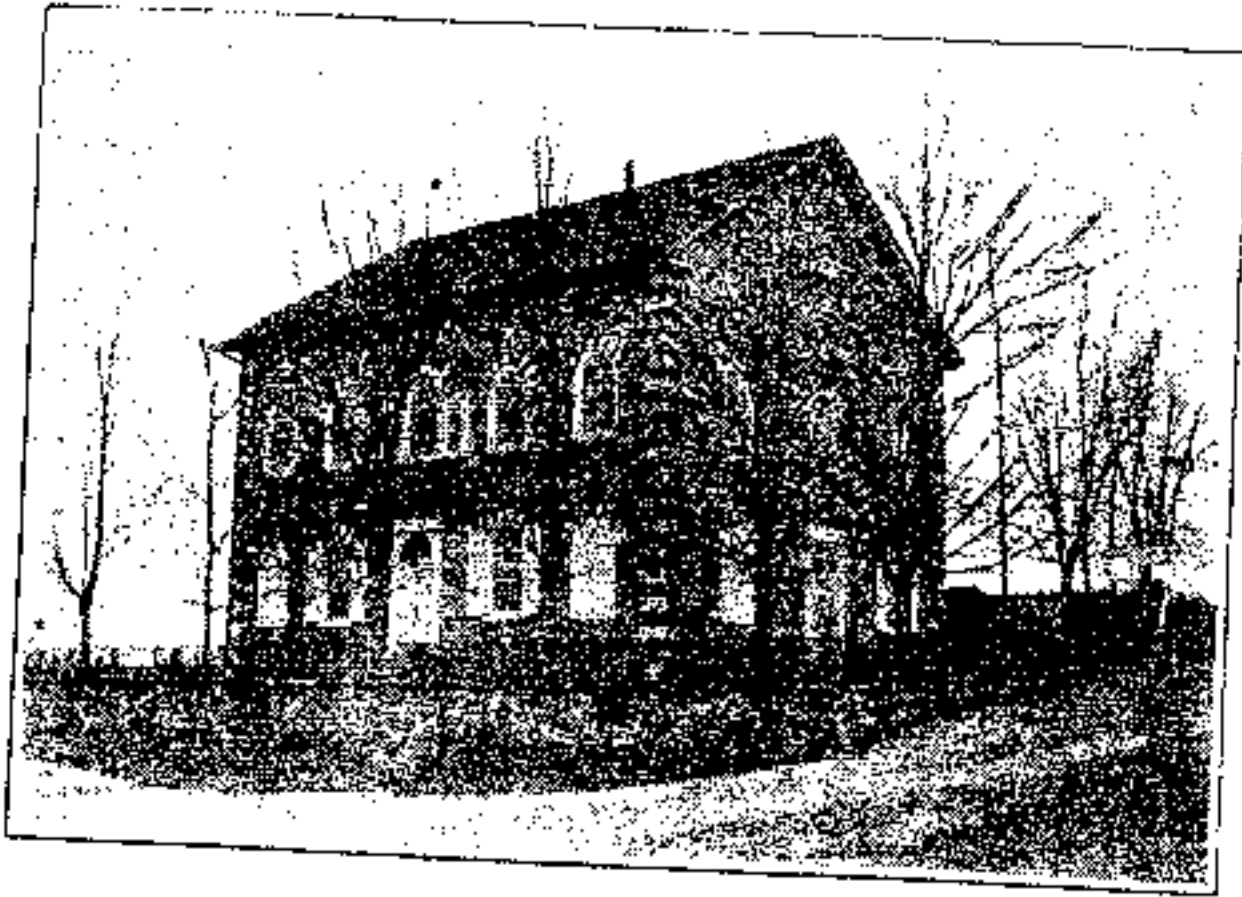
The first church was a stone building, length 40 feet, width 36 feet, height 20 feet. The corner-stone was laid in 1751 and the building was probably completed in 1754. The mason work was done by Andrew and John Dietz at about twenty cents a perch and the carpenter work including doors, pews, etc., was done by Frederick Kobel and Christian Betz for about \$105.00, nails and glue furnished by the carpenters.

The second building—walls a part of the present edifice, was built during 1814 to 1817. The corner-stone was laid May 1st 1814. In 1849 this building was remodeled at an expense of \$1342.59. Extensive repairs were also made in 1883 and the dedicatory services were held on November 25, 1883. On January 21, 1911, the congregation voted to renovate the building and build an addition of 14 feet to the east with a tower and bell, also a pulpit recess of 8 feet to the West, raising and inclining the floor, inserting a new ceiling, refurnishing and the installation of steam heat. This work was done at a cost of \$13,403.26 and the building was reconsecrated on May 26, 1912. In 1922 electric lights

LUTHERANS IN BERKS COUNTY

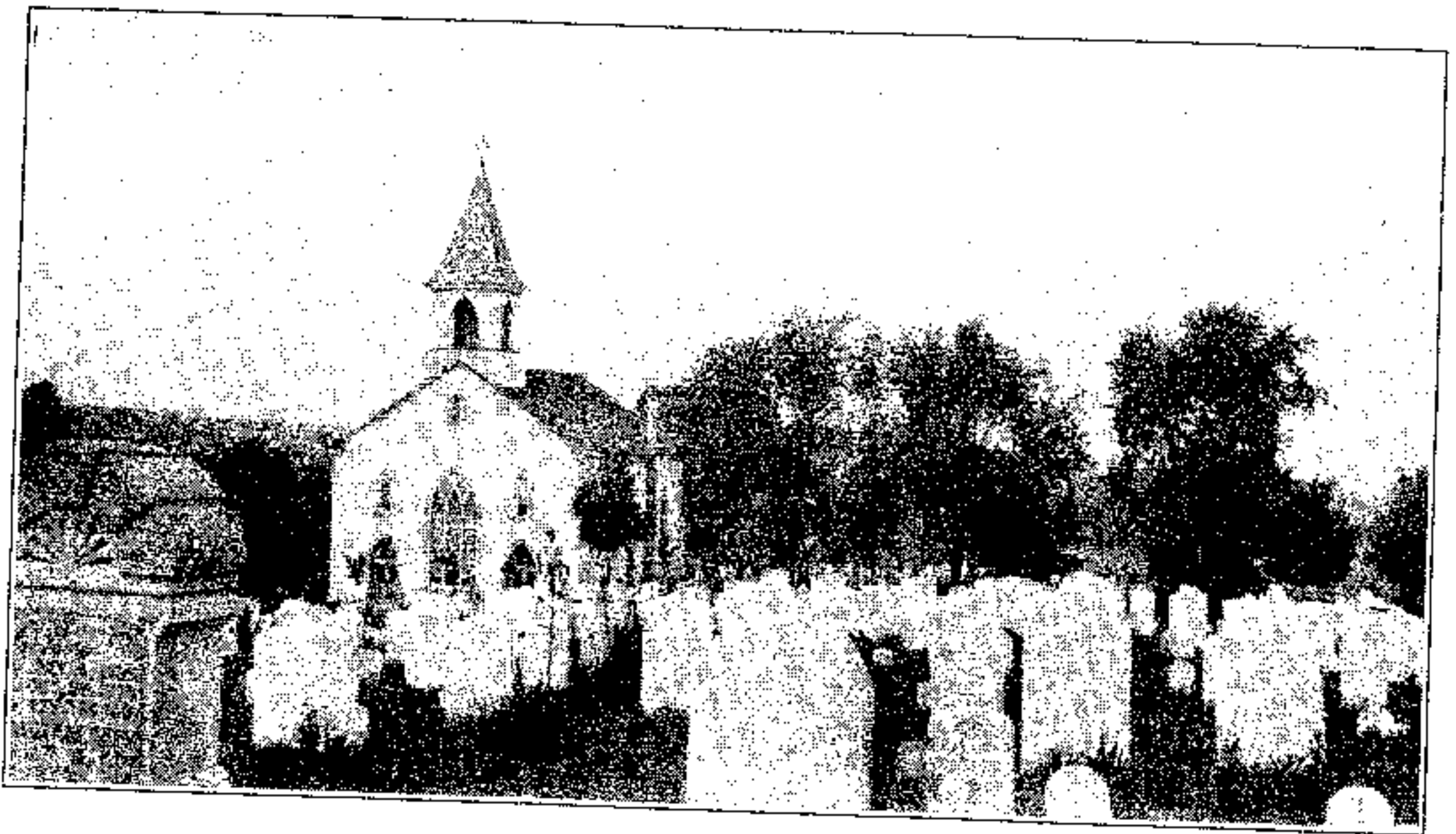
were installed at an expense of \$700.00 which was paid by the Sunday School.

The Lutherans had entire control and use of the church until August 5, 1876, when "permission was given to a Re-



OLD ST. DANIEL'S

formed Congregation, by the St. Daniel's Lutheran Congregation of Heidelberg Township, in consideration of the sum of one dollar per annum to have a right to hold religious services in the building." The Reformed held the



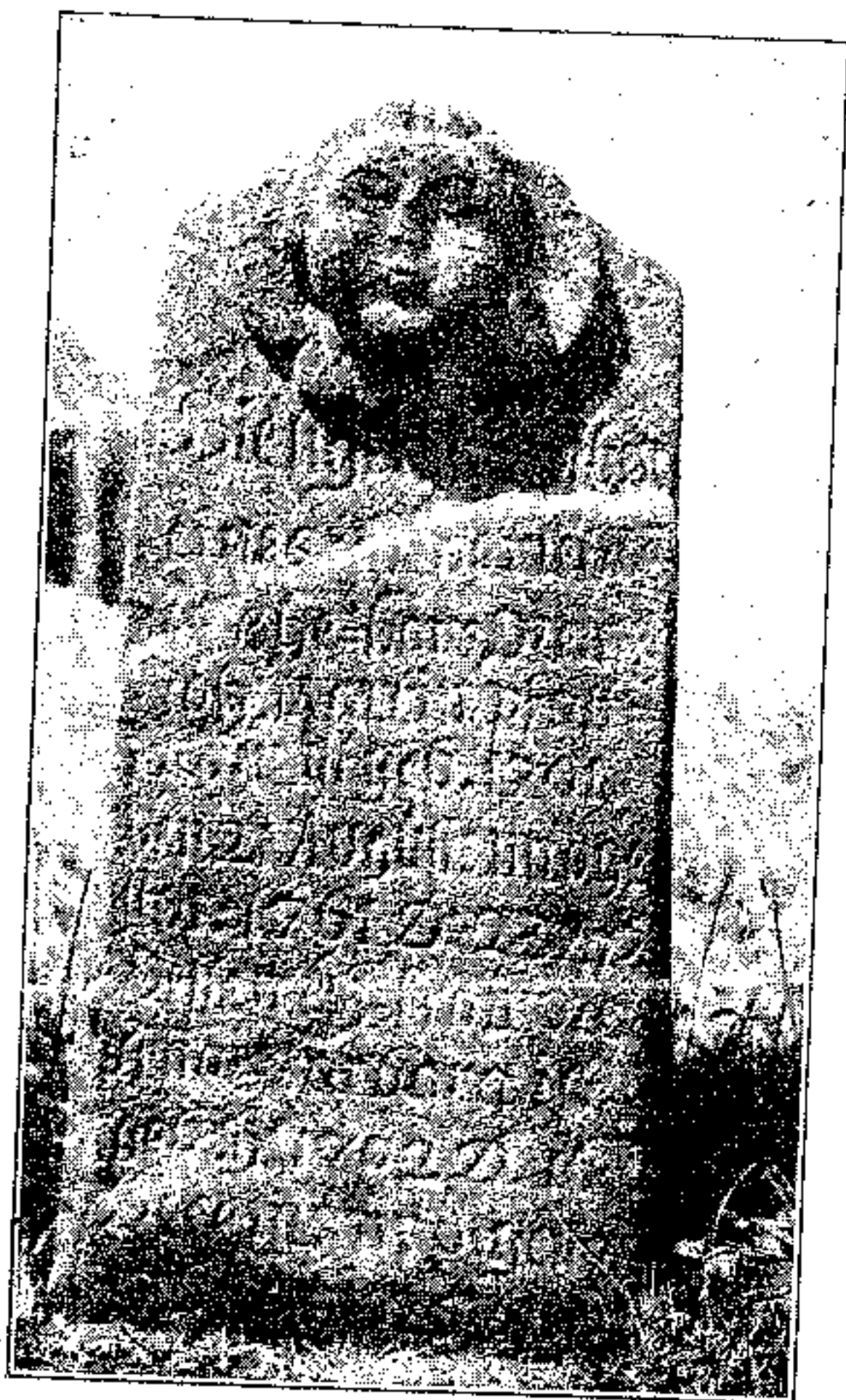
CHURCH VIEW WITH THREE CEMETERIES

first service on December 25, 1876 and continued to worship there until February 19, 1905 when, not because of any rupture of friendly relations, but owing to a desire to have

LUTHERANS IN BERKS COUNTY

a church building of their own, more modern in construction and located in a town, they moved to their newly completed building in Robesonia.

From 1750 to 1851 St. Daniel's was connected with the Tulpehocken Charge of which Christ Church, Stouchsburg, was the mother. For a few years St. Daniel's seems to have been an independent congregation and then, with the congregations served by her pastors constantly shift-



OLDEST TOMBSTONE



REVERSE SIDE

ing, there were no definite parish lines until 1887, since which time, St. Daniel's has belonged to what is known as the Womelsdorf Lutheran Parish, composed originally of Womelsdorf, St. Daniel's Host and Strausstown, the latter being dropped in 1913 and Trinity, Robesonia, added in 1917.

From a beginning of a few members, shown as sixteen male members in 1753 the congregation has increased to more than 800 of both sexes; and the dozen surnames of the earliest families have multiplied to about 15 dozen.

Some of the names appearing on the church roll since before the Revolutionary war are the following: Bechtel, Bender, Bricker, Brossman, Brown, Engel, Ernst, Fidler, Filbert, Fisher, Gerhart, Grater, Gruber, Hassler, Himmelberger, Huber, Hoover, Koch, Leininger, Lengel, Long, Machamer, Maderness, Miller, Mountz, Moyer, Palm, Pott or Putt, Schaeffer, Smith, Snyder, Strauss, Stump, Wagner, Wolf and Wenrich.

The pastors who served St. Daniel's Church are as follows: Rev. John Nicholas Kurtz, from 1750 to 1770, a period of about 20 years; Rev. Christopher Emanuel Schulze from 1771 to 1809, about 38 years; Rev. William Beates is supposed to have been the pastor from 1809 to 1811; Rev. Daniel Ulrich, from 1811 to 1853, fully 42 years; Rev. Thomas Theophilus Jaeger, from 1853 to 1864, about 10 years; Rev. Henry Seipel Miller, from July 1864 to 1865, about one-half year; Rev. Aaron Finfrock, from 1864 to 1891, about 27 years; Rev. William Wilberforce Kramlich, from 1892 to 1901, about 10 years; Rev. Oscar Erwin Pflueger, from 1902 to 1913, about 10 years; Rev. Harvey Samuel Kidd, from 1914 to the present time.

Note. A complete history of the congregation, including a transcript of all records available making a volume of 562 pages of typewritten material was produced by Mr. M. A. Gruber, of Washington, D. C., and presented to the congregation in 1908. The above facts and statements are largely culled from this volume.

ST. JOHN'S, HOST

THE St. John's Lutheran Church of Host, Pa., dates its history from June 12, 1858 on which date the members of the Reformed Church, which was established at this place at least 120 years earlier, adopted the following preamble to a set of resolutions also adopted, giving the Lutheran congregation to be organized the right of worship and use of the building for the customary consideration of one dollar per annum: "Whereas the Lutherans of this community have already for some time applied for the privilege of organizing a Lutheran congregation." The reason for this application was the distance to the existing