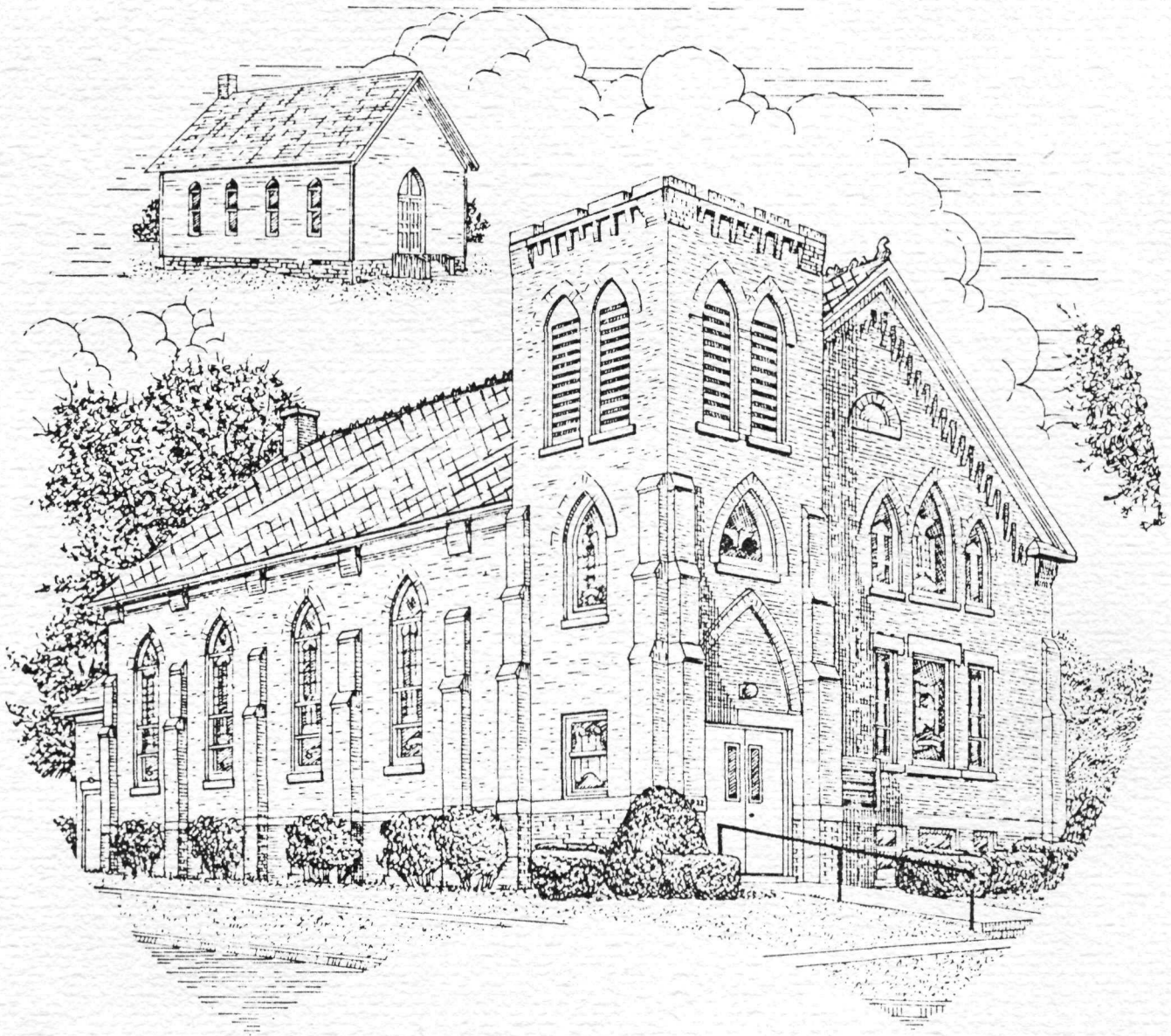


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1653



First Presbyterian Church

Lancaster, Wisconsin

1883 - 1983

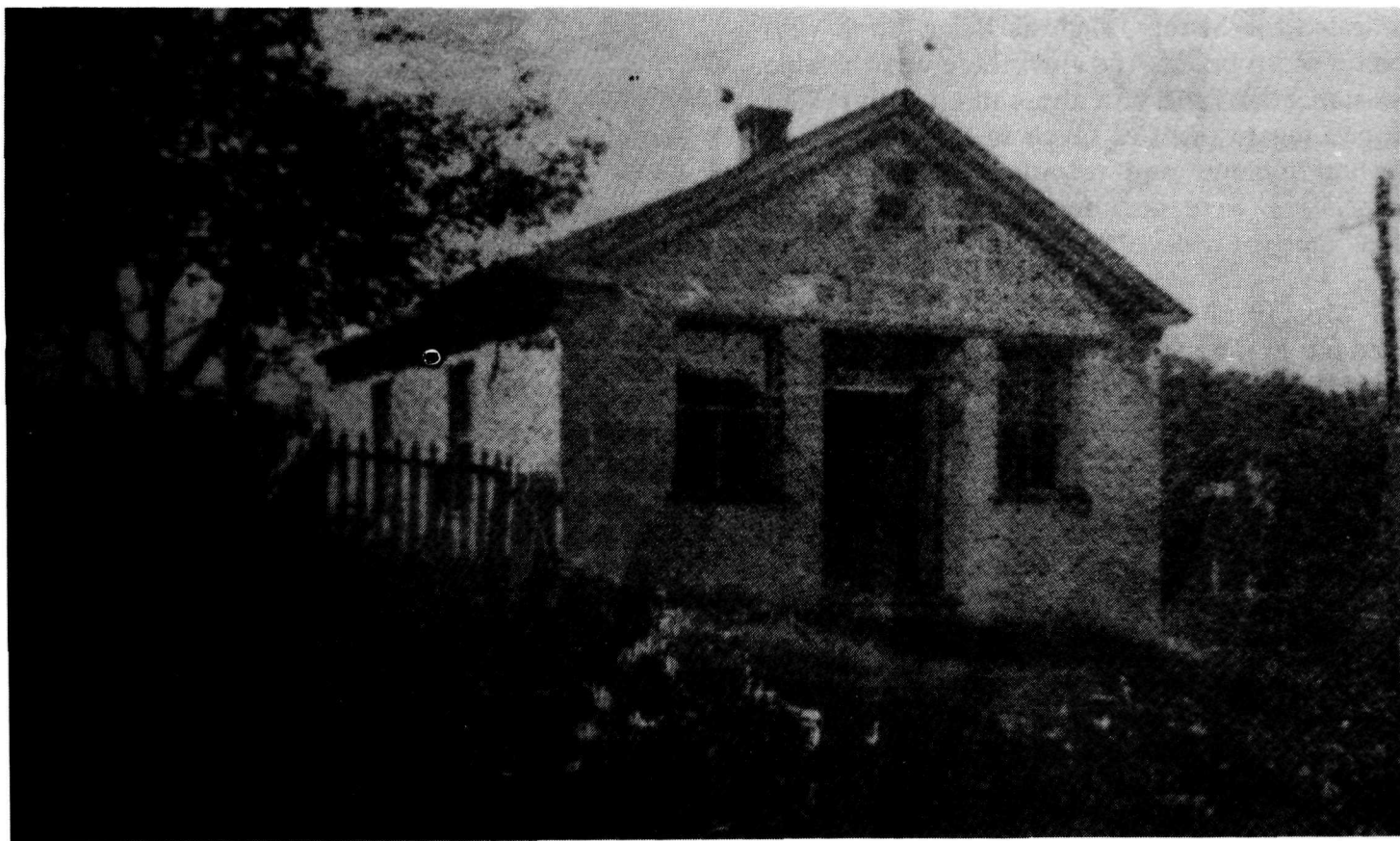
In the beginning...

“There was a German Presbyterian Church organized by the Germans and Americans about 1850 in Rockville, Wis. The organization as thus constituted continued for a number of years. When a separation occurred, the Germans affecting a separate organization. The church is of brick, of limited dimensions and handsomely situated on the brow of the hill. The congregation at present numbers 43 members, the church property valued at \$1,000.00 and the following pastors have served since its founding: The Rev. John Beully, J. Liesfeld, J. Burk and A. C. Stark.”

(from the Butterfield history of Grant County, Wis.)

The trustees at this church were Henry Kuster, Chris Vesperman and Jacob Kundart.

The church was torn down to make way for the new highway.



Presbyterian Church, Rockville, Wisconsin

In 1877, there labored a company of men in the state of Wisconsin. They migrated by train to Nebraska, 35 in number. They were to make their homes in the sectional ranges of Lancaster County, Nebraska. They met the 27th of August, 1878 with a committee to complete the plans for organizing a Presbyterian Church. Rev. John Burk, a member of the first graduating class of Dubuque Seminary was their first pastor.

Early Hurricane

The Hurricane Church was organized around 1856 as a mission church. They built their first building in 1857.

The early records are written in German. The first records that we can identify are 1880. The elders at that time were Kasper Flitsch and Anton Knoke. The clerk was Thomas Hartman. The membership included the following: Christian Brinkman, Johanna Brinkman, Mrs. Barbara Flitsch, Anna Flitsch, Simon Flitsch, Henry Eggers, Sylvia Eggers, Heinrich Timm, Karoline (Brinkman) Timm, Kasper Fluetsch, Anton Knoke, Hana Knoke, Albert Knoke, Thomas Hartman, Barbara (Wieland) Hartman.

The following were examined for membership: Lydia Eggers, John Liesch, Elizabeth Liesch, Theodore Bishoff, Julianna Bishoff, Valentine Flitsch, Jacob Fleutsch, Matilda Fleutsch, Christina Flitsch, Wilhelm Brinkman, Emma Brinkman, Anna Brinkman, Matilda Brinkman, Jacob Wieland, Dora Wieland, George Wieland, Annie Wieland, Florian Yoose, Menga Yoose, August Keller, Wilhelmina Keller, Mrs. Anna Bendorf.

A. C. Stark was the moderator.

At the annual meeting in July, 1888, Rev. Nicolaus Sulzer, pastor of the Marion Church appointed moderator by the Presbytery, conducted the meeting. He had been instructed by Presbytery to see to it that this church be regularly supplied with the preaching of the word. Jacob Wieland was appointed clerk. Rev. Sulzer and Deacon H. Timm were the committee appointed to contact Rev. J. A. Ringold and have him preach next Sunday and be considered as a pulpit supply.

At the congregational meeting on July 13, Rev. Ringold said he would be the supply and would be willing to accept his services on certain Sabbath afternoons every 2 or 4 weeks. It was resolved that he come every other Sabbath day and the amount subscribed this year was satisfactory.

On October 26, 1890, every member should contribute one dollar and it shall be given to the minister on or before January 1, 1891.

The rest of the Hurricane Church history will be found with the history of the Lancaster Church.

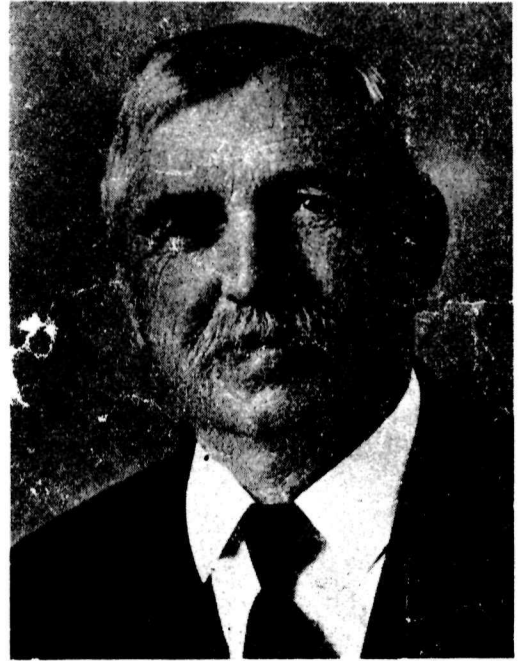
Early Lancaster

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Wisconsin River held at Madison, May 3, 1883, a request of several church members connected with Rockville and other persons in and near Lancaster, asking that the Presbytery consent to and aid in the organization of a Presbyterian Church in Lancaster was received.

Presbytery appointed a committee consisting of Rev. A. C. Stark, Rev. J. A. Ringold and Rev. L. Abels to meet with the people of Lancaster. On May 13, 1883 after divine worship, the First German Presbyterian Church of Lancaster was organized with the following members: Mr. Fred Diesel and wife Lena (Breihan), Mr. Henry Diesel and wife Lizzie (Garner), Mr. Henry C. Vesperman and wife Anna (Spease), Mr. John Jeide and wife Lizzie (Napp), Mrs. Margreth Hoehn, Miss Maggie Hoehn and Mr. George Hoehn.

The first elders elected were Henry C. Vesperman and Mr. Fredrick Diesel. The trustees elected were Mr. Fredrick Diesel, Mr. Henry C. Vesperman and Mr. Henry Diesel. The Rev. John A. Ringold was pastor. The services the first year were held in the Baptist Church.

Other early members were Jacob Hoehn, Mrs. Emma Napp Schmidt, Anna Salis, Fannie Wagner, Benjamin Hartlein, Conrad Napp and wife Elizabeth (Brek), John Stippich and wife Maria (Wagner) and Miss Bertha Vesperman.



Rev. John A. Ringold

In the summer of 1884 a frame building 26' x 40' was erected for the sum of \$1,000.00.



Church and Parsonage



Church - Rail Fence - Dirt Street
Corner of Oak and Jefferson

Know all men by these presents: That the undersigned Frederick Diesel Henry Diesel and Henry C Vesperman and those who are and may become associated with them for the purposes herein specified have organized themselves into a religious society of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America located in the City of Lancaster County of Grant and State of Wisconsin, for religious charitable and educational purposes, which society shall be known and incorporated by the name of the First German Presbyterian Church of Lancaster Grant County Wisconsin
Dated this 1st day of May in the year 1883
Frederick Diesel
Henry Diesel
Henry C. Vesperman

Rev. Ringold served the Lancaster, Hurricane, Stitzer and Marion Presbyterian churches. In 1890 he tendered his resignation but the people were reluctant to let him go, so he remained under the following conditions:

That people take more interest and take an active part in the church work and that they bring their children to Sunday School. That they pay him \$450.00 in cash outside of the mission support. That they provide a parsonage for him. These three requests were granted and he stayed.

In January 1891 at the congregational meeting they decided to buy the lot beside the church for \$250.00 and to build a parsonage as soon as they could in the spring. The total cost of the parsonage and lot was \$1,347.38, Liberty and Hurricane churches to help pay the debt.

Other members joining the church around 1900 were: Wilhelm Lorenz, Christian H. Breihan and wife Lena (Roth), Conrad Vesperman and wife Mary (Napp), John and Linda Diesel, Florence Kohlenberg, Wilhelmina Lorenz, Fred Reinke and wife, Wm. Reinke, Lena, Louise and Fredericka Reinke, Titus Wagner and wife Lena, Elfrieda Diesel, Ida Lorenz, Conrad Breihan, Conrad Kundert, Christian Vesperman and wife.

While the Ringolds were here they lost two children, one died of whooping cough and is buried at the Presbyterian Cemetery at Stitzer and one is buried at Hillside at Lancaster. They had three other sons and one daughter.

Rev. Ringold accepted a call to Arcadia, Iowa in 1902. He died in 1931 at the age of 80 years.



John Jeide



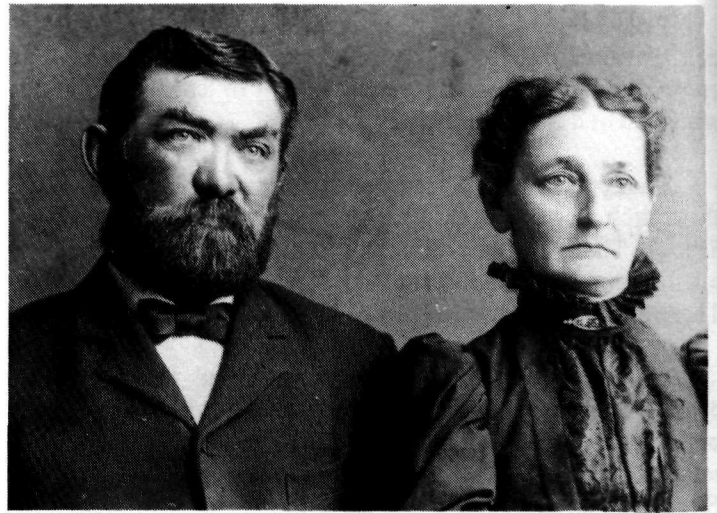
**Mrs. Elizabeth Napp and daughters,
Mrs. Mary Vesperman, Mrs. Elizabeth Jeide**



George and Bertha Hoehn



Margreth Hoehn



Conrad and Mary Vesperman



Henry C. Vesperman family



George Hoehn



Maggie Hoehn

Rev. Herman Sill came January 1, 1903 and left March, 1908.

Elders at the time at Lancaster were: Titus Wagner and Conrad Breihan; deacons were Henry C. Vesperman and Christian Vesperman; trustees were Conrad Kundert, Wm. Lorenz and Louis Vesperman.

Officers at Hurricane were Thomas Hartman, elder and Sunday School Supt., Val Flitsch, deacon and trustees were George Wieland and Florian Yoose.

With the leaving of Rev. Sill the congregation was discouraged. Presbytery no longer was willing to give support and they could not maintain a minister.

In the spring of 1908, Professor Wm. C. Laube from the Dubuque Seminary visited the church. A Resurrected Church would be a correct term for the German Presbyterian Church at Lancaster. This organization was among the pioneers of our Presbyterianism among the Germans of the West. The congregation was never large, the heavy timber and the hills made the soil hard to conquer. Colony after colony moved from the hill country to more inviting prairies of Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska. The pillars of many of the Presbyterian churches received their first training in the Lancaster community. The original Germans died or moved away. The younger generation was not familiar with the language to take an active part or maintain a deep interest.

Rev. Laube spent two summer vacations in an attempt to save what was left. He rallied the older Germans for regular worship and organized a Sunday school in American language. The sessions of Hurricane and Lancaster met together quite regularly. As there was no pastor at Rockville, quite a number joined the Lancaster church.



Hurricane Communicant Class - May 30, 1909 - Thomas William Wieland, Louis William Bendorf, Charles George Wieland, Reuben August Wieland, John Ernest Bendorf, Peter Edward Wieland, John Valentine Flitsch, Frank Albert Wieland, John Wieland (?), Annie Marie Wieland, Laura Helen Bendorf, Clara Anna Wieland, Emma Lizzie Koeller, Emilia Augusta Abt, Anna Louisa Koeller, Nellie Isabella Wieland, Ruth Lucille Hodoval, Irene Hazel Hodoval, Mrs. Alvina Bendorf.

In 1909 they had communion services in both languages. The first Ladies Aid was organized and the first Harvest Festival was held. In 1910, Rev. Laube felt that they were ready to call a full time minister.



Mrs. Elizabeth Napp, Mrs. Bertha Hoehn and Esther Wepking beside the Lancaster church. Note the old church windows. The girls cut out paper to put on windows and make them look like stained glass.

Rev. Laube started the Bethany Home in Dubuque later. Today in Dubuque there is a 93 foot bell tower on the University of Dubuque Campus in memory of Dr. Wm. C. Laube. The Laubes had three sons, Paul, Herbert and Greg. Dr. Paul is living in Dubuque practicing medicine.

Rev. Laube died February 20, 1944 at the age of 72.



Rev. Laube and family



Rev. Wm. Laube

In 1910, Rev. August Cramer was called to preach the word at the Lancaster and Hurricane churches. He had just graduated from the Dubuque Seminary. He was installed October 9, 1910. He worked hard in his ministry and was assisted by his faithful wife.

**Both Churches Had Picnic
At The Louis Vesperman Farm**



**1911 Church Picnic at Louis Vesperman Farm
Hurricane Church**

1st row: Rose Wieland, Roland Bendorf, Downer Kerr, Bertha Wieland, Nettie Wieland, Opal Hodoval, Lillian Howard, Pearl Kerr. 2nd row: Lena Wieland, Emma Wieland, Mrs. Cramer, Rev. Cramer, Clara Wieland, Mrs. Koeller and Laura on lap, Mrs. Bendorf and Mrs. Yoose. 3rd row: Roy H., Will Koeller, Martin Wieland, Will Wieland, Percy Wunderlin, Esther Wieland, Opal Hodoval, Irene Hodoval, Elsie Koeller, Florence Wieland, Rosa Bendorf, Belva Kerr. 4th row: Henry B., George Wieland, Frank Wieland, Sam Kerr, Nettie Koeller, Wallace Caley, Ed Wieland, Ruth Hodoval, Minnie Wieland, Laura Bendorf, Nellie Wieland, Cora Yoose. 5th row: Reuben Wieland, Fred Bendorf, Minnie L., Andrew Y., Fred Wieland, Ernest Petty, August Koeller. 6th row: John Bendorf, Tom Wieland, and others.

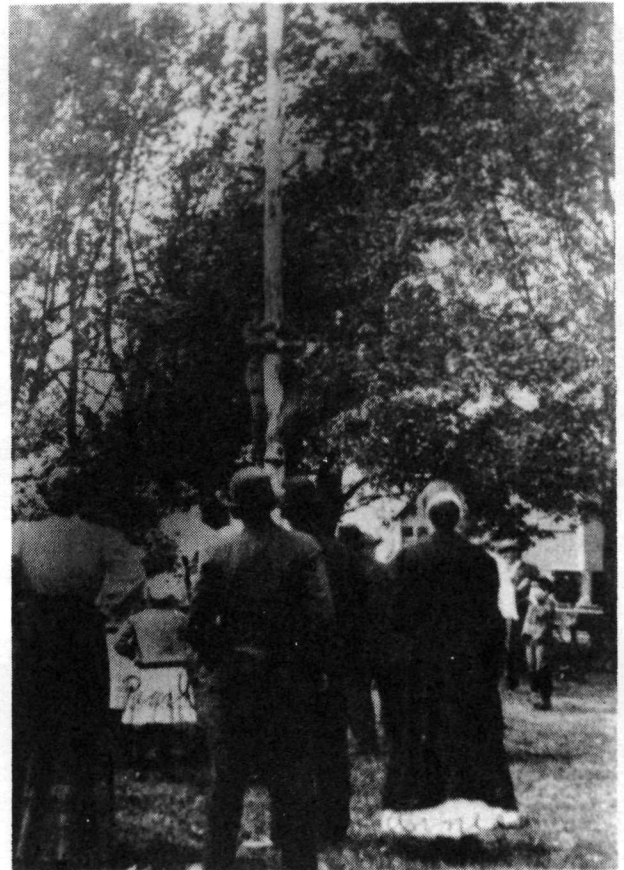


1911 Church Picnic at Louis Vesperman Farm



**1911 Church Picnic at Louis Vesperman Farm
Lancaster Church**

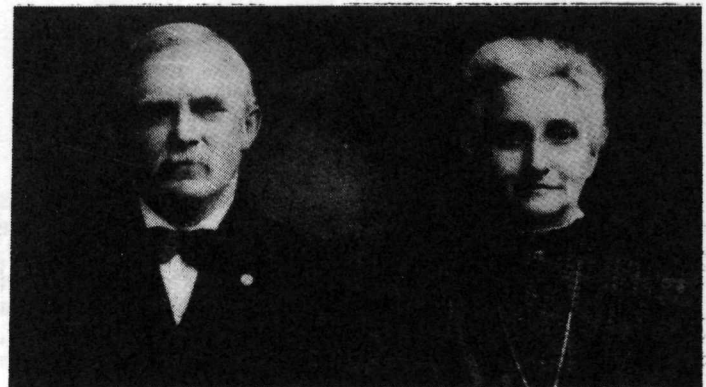
1st row: Louis Vesperman, Lena Vesperman, Elizabeth Jeidy, Salina Vesperman, Rudolph Vesperman, Emma Wepking holding Louisa, May Vesperman, Bertha Hoehn, George Hoehn. Middle: Rev. and Mrs. August Cramer, Esther Wepking, Geneva Wepking. Back row: Will Vesperman, Al Vesperman, Christian Vesperman, L. O. Vesperman. There are others on this picture.



Fred Wieland climbing pole

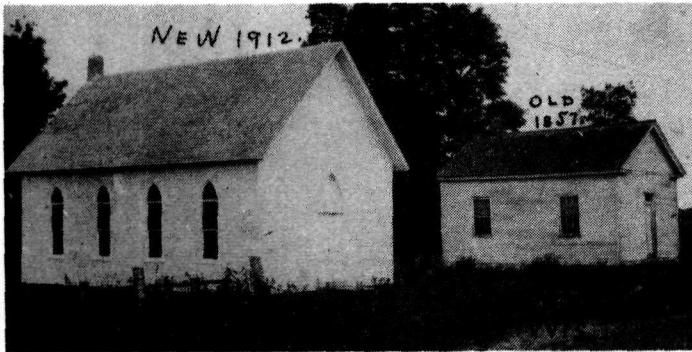
Pearl Kerr

Belva Kerr



Christian and Selina Vesperman

A beautiful new building was built at Hurricane to replace the old Hurricane church. It was certainly an addition to the community. The old church had been the spiritual home of these people for over 50 years. In the last few years it became too small and too cold in winter. Therefore, the congregation unanimously decided on building a new church 24' x 40'.



No one refused a helping hand and all gave liberally, so that the new church could be finished without a cent of debt. It cost \$1,462.32. Perhaps never had a public house been erected in such peace and joy as this church. They used the Methodist church while this was being built. The dedication service was held May 16, 1912, with divine services at 10:00 in the morning and an afternoon service at 2:00 with refreshments at noon served by the ladies of the church. The elder was George Wieland, the deacon Andrew Yoose and trustees were August Koeller, Lant Caley, Reuben Wieland, Lewis Bendorf and Thomas Wieland, the clerk was Charles Wieland.

Hurricane Church Building Committee was the following: Albert Salis, Sr., George Wieland, Jacob Flitsch, James Hodoval, Rev. August Cramer.

The little church at Stitzer failed to be revived, contrary elements removed the building and converted it into a barn.



1912 Confirmation Class

1st row: Earl Vesperman, Esther Wepking, Rev. Cramer, Margaret Lay, Rudolph Hoehn. 2nd row: Cora Wieland, Oscar Kohlenberg, Lillian Holzinger. 3rd row: Alva Meyer, Harry Vesperman, Reuben Holzinger.

Bible and hymn books were thrown on the ground, the work came to a bad ending. Consequently quite a few of the members came and joined the Lancaster church.

October 1912, Rev. Cramer accepted a call to Avon, South Dakota. The Cramers had five daughters and one son. Rev. Cramer died September 25, 1964 at the age of 80.

In 1913, the church was fortunate to secure as his successor Rev. Wm. Harberts, who had just come from two years of studying in Germany with his young wife and a Ph. Degree. Neither the Ph.D nor the wife had spoiled him for hard work. They were looking for a hard field and selected Lancaster. It was hard, small attendance and small salary for the first year.

All the while Sunday school was pushed and gradually preaching in the American language was increased to every fourth Sunday. The attendance at these were so large and interest so keen that soon the older Germans rendered the services in their language for services all could understand. On one hot summer Sunday morning there were 175 in attendance. They renovated the whole church, put a basement under it and put in a furnace. The Harberts did outstanding work with the young people. They reached out to many different areas of the county, arranging to have students preach at the different churches. The Christian Endeavor Society was very strong.



Confirmation Class at Hurricane in 1914

1st row: Lillie Nora Abt, Reuben (Isaac) Clifton, Irene Hodoval, Martin Wieland, Opal Anna Hodoval, William Carl Koeller, Rosa Marie Wieland, Carl Abt. 2nd row: Beulah (Agnes) Clifton, Dewey Behnke, Inez Nora Keene, Wallace Wieland, Florence Anna Wieland, Frederick Wieland, Maude Dorothea Hartman, William Wieland. 3rd row: Rev. William Harberts, Floyd Roesch, Mabel Irene Keene, Claire (Luland) Clifton, Ivah Aleva Keene, Elsie Minnie Koeller. Back row: Chris Abt, Ruth Hodoval, Alda Barbara Hartman, Percy Wunderlin, Belva Leona Kerr, Esther Emma Wieland. Absent from photo: Henry Bendorf, John Armstrong, Claude Clifton, Rose Bendorf (?).

Ada Hoehn served as organist in 1915 and 1916.

In 1915, he was conducting Bible class at Rockville and Mrs. Harberts was in charge of the Ladies Aid. There were services held at Boice Creek, Ellenboro, Buckwheat Ridge and Hurricane every week.

The Ladies Aid held their Annual Bazaar and Pantry Sale in the Wright House sample room.

The Christmas Eve service was a special cantata, "Search for the King," given by the young people, about 20 participating. A large and handsome arch was arranged and the exercises were held under it.

In 1917, the Lancaster and Hurricane congregations in the Madison Presbytery attained self support with a liberal salary for their pastor. Hurricane has been drawing aid since 1856 and Lancaster since 1883.

The Madison Presbytery met for its fall meeting at the church at Lancaster in 1918. This was the first time that this church has entertained the Presbytery.

Rev. Harberts had student Buchholz as his regular assistant every Sunday, preaching in one of the different churches.

The Christian Endeavor officers in 1919 were President Velma Stivarius, Vice President Esther Wepking, Secretary Rosa Bendorf, Treasurer Rudolph Vesperman and Organist was Bertie Vogel.

Henry Holzinger was elected janitor with a salary of \$20.00 per year. Organist was Mrs. Ed C. Vesperman and secretary was Fred Vesperman. The organist received \$25.00 per year.

They decided to have eight trustees. They were Ellsworth Holzinger, J. C. Vesperman, Joe Keene, Emil Pagenkopf, Ed Meyer, Ed C. Vesperman, Adolph Wepking and George Hoehn. Henry Holzinger was treasurer. Elders were Louis Vesperman and Fred Vesperman.

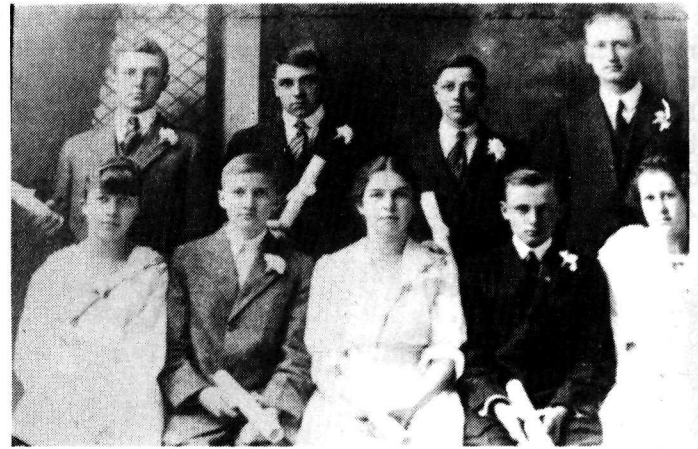
Christian Endeavor Society Picnics.

The C. E. society of the Presbyterian church picnicked at Schreiner park last Wednesday evening from 8:30 to past eleven o'clock. Campfires and bright moonlight made the occasion very pleasant aside from toasting marshmallows, roasting wieners and playing games. There were about sixty young people present. The party "was on" Miss Esther Wepking who with her side contested Miss Velma Stivarius and her side for new members to the society. The contest lasted four weeks and nineteen new members were added.

May 1919

The Christian Endeavor of the Presbyterian church held a watch party at the Adolph Wepking home Friday evening. An enjoyable evening was spent in various games and music. At 10 o'clock an oyster supper was served. Those present were: Misses Florence and Bertha Wieland, Margareta Nehls, Nettie Wieland, Inez and Iva Keene, Geneva and Esther Wepking, Olga Hodoval, Rosa Bendorf and Velma Stavarius; Milton and Walter Macke, Harold Walker, Clarence and Will Vesperman, Rudolph Hartman, Rudolph Vesperman, Rudolph Hoehn and Virgil Hoehn.

Jan 5. 1921.



1917 Confirmation Class

1st row: Grace Holzinger, Rudolph Hartman, Geneva Wepking, Roland Bendorf, Florence Meyers. 2nd row: Virgil Hoehn, Walter Macke, Roy Vesperman, Rev. Harberts.

The confirmation class of April 8, 1917 gave the communion table to the church.

This session members were increased from two to four. The every member canvass was put in use and the pastor's salary was increased greatly.



Louis Vesperman Family

1st row: Bernice, Louis, Corrine, Vera Vesperman. 2nd row: Dora Vesperman, Earl, Lena, Ed, Lydia, Nell Vesperman.



Communicant Class of 1918

Front row: Ethel Wunderlin, Olga Hodoval (Ryan), Bertha Wieland (Peake), Bertha Wieland (Taylor), Genivieve Keene (Irish), Pearl Kerr, Nettie Wieland (Anderson). Back row: Rev. Harberts, Edgar Keene, Rudolph Wieland, George Wieland, Clark Roesch, Ed Keene, Downer Kerr, Otto Wieland. Carl Irish and Ralph Roesch joined in 1918.



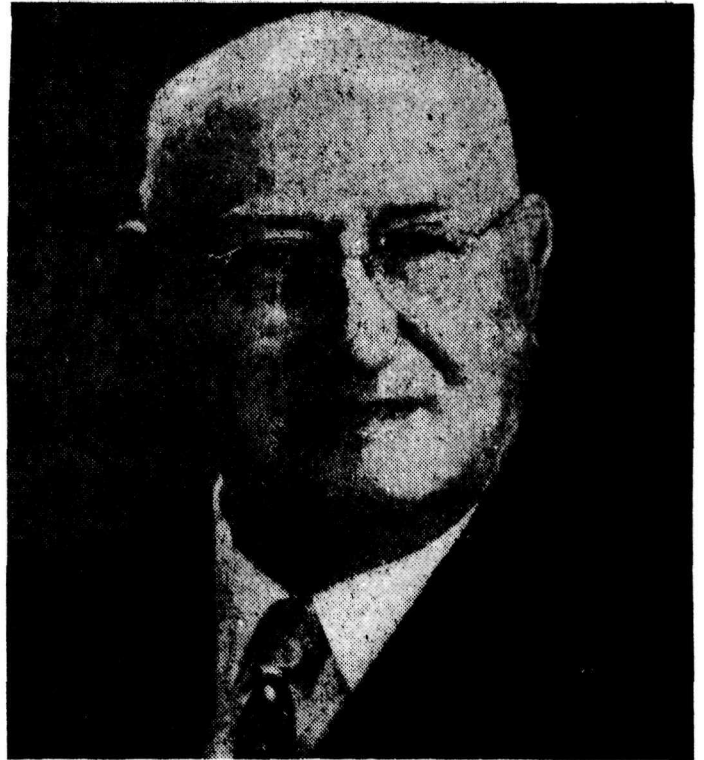
Adolph Wepking Family



Wepking Octagon Home

The Harberts lost a child while they were in Lancaster and it is buried at the Boice Prairie cemetery.

On November 28, 1920, Rev. Harberts resigned to accept a call to Geneseo, Illinois. Four of their 6 children were born while in Lancaster. In 1950, Dr. Harberts and his wife were back in Lancaster and while he was here he baptized four infants. They moved to California where he preached and later retired. He died August 10, 1970 at Berkley, California.



Rev. William Harberts



Rev. and Mrs. Harberts and family

In 1921, Lancaster and Hurricane churches held a joint meeting to call Rev. Wm. Grossheim. The salary was to be \$1,000.00 with the total budget of \$1,526.00. He was just out of seminary and in June married Margaret Lay, a sister of Mrs. Cramer. He was installed October 9, 1921. He labored hard. The Sunday School doubled and there was a large increase in the congregation. April 2, 1922 a special meeting was called. The officers recommended erecting a new church. They decided to have a subscription drive, half to be paid by July 1 and the rest by November 1. They applied from the Board of Church Erection fund for a grant of \$750.00. The first few days of the canvass they had over \$12,000.

Unite Lancaster and Hurricane in 1930

Rev. Henry Marks was called May 19, 1929 with a salary of \$1,500.00. The total budget was \$2,085.00. In 1930 a new steam heating plant was installed. Helen Hildreth was organist and Sam Turner was treasurer.

Madison Presbytery.

We the undersigned members of the Hurricane Presbyterian Church, having had joint services for the last three years with the First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster Wisc, are desirous to be united.

We therefore unanimously request the Presbytery of Madison to unite the Hurricane with the First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster Wisc.

Jacob Hartman
 Rose Hartman
 Anshin Hartman
 Alice Hartman
 Al E. Hartman
 George J. Wieland
 Harry Wieland
 Rudolph Wieland
 Bertina Wieland
 Martin Wieland
 Esther Selis Knod
 Elinor Selis
 Martin Wieland
 Thomas Wieland
 Frank A. Wieland
 William Wieland
 Opal Wieland
 Edward Goose
 Beulah Goose
 Harold Goose

Andrew Goose
 Cora Goose
 Maggie Flitch
 John V. Flitch
 Amelia Flitch
 Clark Roesch
 Floyd Roesch
 Rosa Hampton
 Otto W. Wieland
 Geo. A. Wieland
 Elizabeth Goose
 Reuben Wieland
 Emma E. Wieland
 Lena J. Wieland
 William Wieland
 Percy Wunderlin



Andrew and Cora Yoose
1881 - 1936 1886 -

Andrew, son of Florian and Menga (Aeplian) Yoose. They were early members of the Hurricane Church. Cora daughter of Valentine Loetscher.



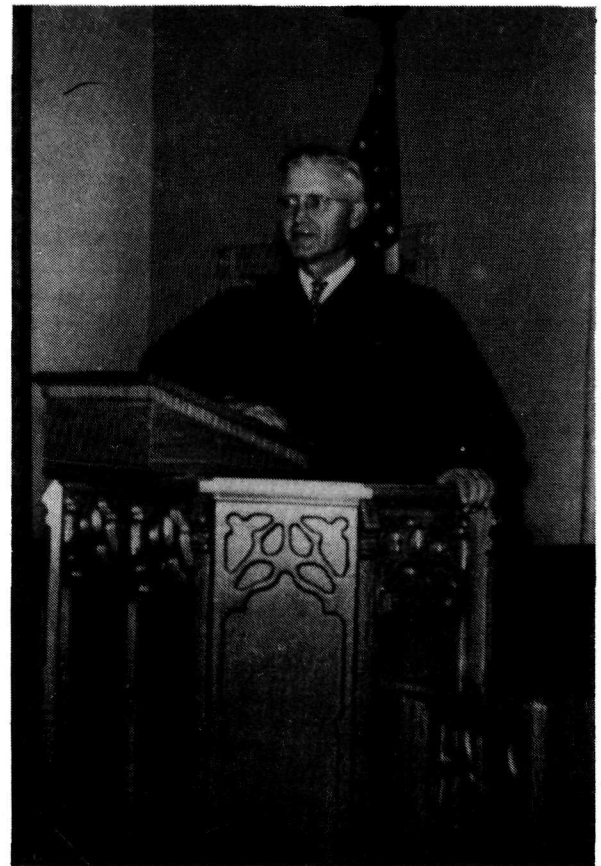
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hartman



1930 - Andrew Yoose Family

January 12, 1930, a joint meeting of Lancaster and Hurricane churches was held, at which time they agreed to unite as one church to be the First Presbyterian Church of Lancaster. The property to be deeded to Lancaster. The pulpit chairs from Hurricane to be kept and used at Lancaster.

Rudolph Hartman, one of our own young men, was ordained into the Christian ministry in 1931. Presbytery was held in Lancaster April 21 and 22 of that year, which was when Rudolph was accepted into the ministry.



1952 - Rev. Rudolph Hartman