

Forward, into the Past

A Brief History of Ellenville's Christ Lutheran Church

(Submitted by Sandra Bollin, based on historical material compiled by the Church, and reviewed by Town Historian John Unverzagt, who supplied the photo of the Church being moved 100 years ago.)

In 1861 Rev. E.C.H. Luebker organized "The First German Lutheran Church of Ellenville." On November 17, 1861 the first service was held at the home of Wilhelm Kuhfoldt. On November 23, 1861 a meeting was held in the home of William Kuhfeldt to establish a constitution and to elect the first church council.

The church building was to be built on a site across from the present parsonage on **Ann Street**. The cornerstone was laid on May 19, 1862. The dedication of the church was on October 19, 1862.

In 1863 Rev. C. Kuehn was installed as the first Pastor. He remained for only six months and was followed by Rev. L.F.E. Krause. From the only German records that can be found, we learned that from 1863 to 1889 the congregation was served by the following ministers: Rev. George Tuerk, Rev. Jacob Goetz, Rev. T. B. Conz, Rev. Charles Roeck, Rev. J. Leonhard Raw, Rev. H. Dorn, Rev. H. B. Kuhn, and Rev. G. Baetz.

As early as 1899, German was the only language at the church. When Pastor Lewis Smith was called to offer service, he brought a drastic change to the church. Services were now in English and German. On August 1, 1897 Pastor Braren was involved in enlarging and rededicating the Church.

Under the leadership of Pastor Neff in 1903, the church building was moved across the street to the corner of **Ann and Market Street**. An Annex was added for a Church School and for social gatherings. While under the ministry of Reverend F. Brezinski, all debt for the church was cleared, an iron fence was erected, and a concrete walkway was put in for the parsonage.

In January 7, 1912, at 4:15 PM, the church was partially destroyed by a fire, which effects still can be seen today in the rafters of the church roof structure. The church was immediately rebuilt and rededicated in April of 1912.

After 1931, the following renovations were made: the church and parsonage were repainted; a new lighting system was installed; new hymnals and gowns were made available for the choir; and a bulletin board was placed in front of the church. These improvements were under the pastorate of Rev. Olney E. Cook prior to the 75th Anniversary in 1936. Gifts included baptismal fount, pulpit and lectern bibles, altar, pulpit and lectern covers, vases, hymn boards, candlesticks, offering plates, pedestal, and new pews.

May 1940 saw needed repairs to the church and parsonage. Stone steps and a pipe railing were erected at the church and the belfry was reshingled, the ornament reinforced, and the steeple was painted. A cellar entrance was built on the Ann Street side of the church. At the parsonage, the chimneys were re-cemented, a hot water tank and stove installed, and in September the furnace was overhauled and storm sashes installed. New steps to the side entrance were also built.

Pastor Ernest A. F. Kallenbeck was pastor from 1940



until 1943. Other improvements are noted including junior choir gowns, and a loft erected by Philip Goldsmith. A daily vacation church was held, daily devotion booklets were distributed, and the stone church was built by Mr. Richard Menzel.

The 80th anniversary was observed on November 2, 1941 with Dr. Trexler bringing the anniversary message. During this pastor's tenure, an autograph quilt was made to raise money. In cleaning out the back of the parsonage in 1960, the quilt was found in perfect condition in an old chest. The quilt was to be on display at the 100th anniversary. (If anyone has information regarding this quilt, please contact Sandra Bollin at 647-5500).

In 1951, the 90th anniversary of the church was celebrated by special services, but no references were noted about the speaker. An interesting note that we find in the Council's minutes records that on May 2, 1955, George Schaffer was elected a life member of the Church Council. In 1955 the Lutheran Activity Club was organized. They presented the Church with a Gorham brass offering plate. They also had four road signs placed on the main roads at the entrance to town. In January 1958, at the Annual Congregational Meeting, the Constitution was changed to permit women to serve on the Church Council. Although this important step was taken, no women were actually elected to the Council until a couple of years later.

Currently, our church is once again found to be in need of repairs. A new roof is in the plans for repair this year.

Our annual Turkey Supper will be held **May 3rd**, the first Saturday in May. Please feel welcome to come and join us. 

**Jeff Kaplan
Ruth Ann Gunter
Raymond Younger**

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SUPPORT and CONFIDENCE**

NOW the REAL WORK BEGINS!!!!