

# Lutheran Church Congregation To Observe 165th Anniversary

## 2-Day Celebration Near Morrisburg

MORRISBURG, June 25.—(Special)—St. John's Lutheran Church, Riverside, will on July 3 and 4 celebrate the 165th anniversary of the congregation's founding. This will be a unique event, commemorating the beginning of the oldest Protestant congregation west of Halifax.

The history of this little congregation and church, situated in the countryside on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, is closely linked with the first settlement of this part of the country. Previous to the American War of Independence, the founders of St. John's, German Lutherans, had lived in the Mohawk Valley, where they were known as thrifty and prosperous farmers. After the war, in which they had taken little part, they found themselves unwanted and targets of much unpleasantness. To escape this and with the promise of liberal grants of land in Canada, the hardy settlers left their homes and, with only what they could carry, made the perilous journey to Montreal. From there they proceeded west in boats to Cornwall, where they found the government land agent. The numbers of the lots they were to receive were placed on slips of paper and each drew for his land. Their westward journey was re-



**FIRST PASTOR**—Shown above is Rev. Samuel Schwerdtfeger, first pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church at Riverside which at that time was called Zion's Lutheran Church. He accepted a call sent by settlers in 1789 and served the flock for 14 years.



**PRESBYTER PASTOR**—Shown above is Rev. P. L. Howard, present minister of St. John's Lutheran Church, Riverside.

sumed and on June 30, 1784, these first settlers of the district landed, each anxious to visit his lot and see the location of his new home. These settlers were called United Empire Loyalists, which became shortened to U.E. Loyalists.

The first task was to erect shelters and, with the system of mutual help that was characteristic of the pioneers, this was soon accomplish-

ed and the work of clearing at least part of the land of trees began.

Always deeply religious, the settlers took time to hold meetings for public worship and as early as 1787 a messenger was sent to Philadelphia for a book of sermons and a hymn book. These were used by a lay reader till a clergyman could be secured.

By the year 1789 the settlers were able to start building their first church. One who was known as the Centre Common, they began the construction of a frame church 80 feet by 30 feet on the site of the present Anglican Church. An early winter that year stopped the work till the following spring, when the church was soon completed.

While construction was still under way, a call was sent by messenger to Rev. Samuel Schwerdtfeger, living near Albany, N.Y. He was well known to many settlers and had suffered much hardship following the war. The call was accepted at once and in June, 1789, the first pastor dedicated the new church, naming it "Zion's Lutheran Church." It was known to the English as "The Dutch Church" and in some of the records was called "The German Protestant Church."

**Petition Government**

Three years later the congregation petitioned the Government for half the Centre Common. This was favorably received and they were given a license of occupation. The land was cleared, a parsonage built and an orchard planted.

The pastor served his flock well for 14 years and organized Lutheran congregations at Matilda and Autawilla. He died in 1803 and was buried in the church cemetery.

**Other Ministers**

The next minister was Rev. Frederick A. Meyer, who came from the Bay of Quinte District, where his father was a minister. He resided in 1807 to go to Lancaster, Pa.

He was succeeded by Rev. J. G. Weigandt, who also came from the Bay of Quinte district and was a son-in-law of Rev. Samuel Schwerdtfeger. He took charge in 1808 and for three years the affairs of the congregation ran smoothly. After that there was considerable disruption. Church of England clergy-men at the time were paid by the Government a salary of two hundred pounds sterling per year. This contrasted sharply with the meagre amount the settlers could pay and in 1811 Rev. Mr. Weigandt was ordained a Church of England clergyman by Bishop Mountain in Quebec. When changes were made in the form of worship in the pioneer church suspicions were aroused and when the facts became generally known there was much confusion. Some followed their pastor, while others refused.

These latter, in 1812, invited Rev. Mr. Meyer to return and when he consented two sleighs were sent to Pennsylvania to bring him and his family to Riverside.

When he arrived, the Lutherans demanded the parsonage, glebe and church they had built, but this was soundly refused. A compromise was effected by allowing both congregations to use the church on alternate Sundays.

After striving for three years to live on what his parishioners could give, Rev. Mr. Meyer also joined the Church of England. He settled in Matilda and continued there as an Anglican minister till his death.

For nine years the Lutherans were without a minister save for occasional visits of a travelling minister or a student.

**Mr. Hayunga Arrives**

In 1826 Rev. Herman Hayunga, then serving as a professor in Hartwood Seminary, resigned his chair and came to the St. Lawrence Lutheran. A mammoth task confronted him, the congregation was divided, without a place to worship and suspicious of the newcomer.

By his zeal and efforts, visiting from home to home, he brought a semblance of order and gained the confidence of the people. He built a church in Williamsburg, which was opened in June, 1827, and to which he contributed largely from his private means.

In 1833 the Church of England received a deed of the property it already held of possession. The same year Conrad Rhymer presented the congregation with 2½ acres of land a short distance west of the original church. A new church, St. John's, was built that year. Rev. Mr. Hayunga contributed generously to this, sometimes more than he received from his congregation as a yearly stipend.

He recognized the need of using English in the church service and gradually made the change preaching alternately in German and Eng-



**RIVERSIDE LUTHERAN CHURCH**—St. John's Lutheran Church at Riverside near Morrisburg is photographed above. The congregation will celebrate its 165th anniversary July 3 and 4, commemorating the founding of the oldest Protestant congregation west of Halifax. East of this site 160 years ago United Empire Loyalists built the original church. The present church was built in 1833.

(Photo by Smith)



**CAIRN COMMEMORATES PIONEER PASTORS**—Shown above is the stone cairn erected 10 years ago on the grounds of St. John's Lutheran Church, Riverside, to commemorate "the faith, courage and sacrifices of the pioneer Lutheran pastors . . . and the men and women who established this church." It was unveiled by the late R. B. Bennett, then Prime Minister of Canada, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of St. John's.

(Photo by Smith)

lished to reside in Williamsburg township and served in vacation and other intervals, as the head school. He died in 1871 and is buried in St. John's cemetery, Riverside.

**Government Gives Grant**

In 1848 the Government granted the Lutherans of Williamsburg 23,000 and 27½ acres of land to compensate for the loss of their former holdings.

**Present St. John's**

The present St. John's Church was erected in 1863 and the congregation to-day is made up largely of descendants of the original hardy settlers who strove to establish a Christian settlement. They were a hardy race, used to hardships and long, travelling miles through forest trails and on the river to obtain the necessary supplies. Their days were full and their labours arduous, but, with all, they still had time for worship. Religion for them was a vital need, something for which they were willing to make personal sacrifices, to give of their time and scanty means to keep it alive and flourishing.

Where once was forest with the fronting river as a highway now stands a flourishing settlement often called "The Churches" from the two places of worship there. A broad paved road lies in front over which cars pass east and west. History was made in that small sector, the first settlers of Dundas, the first Protestant Church, rival soldiers' burial here to the Battle of Crysler's Farm, a short distance east.

In 1899 St. John's celebrated its 150th anniversary. Hon. R. B. Bennett, then Prime Minister of Canada, was present for this memorable occasion. A stone Cairn surmounted by a large stone cross was unveiled at that time. A brass tablet on the Cairn bears the inscription:—

"That Ye might tell it to the generations following"

"To commemorate the Loyalty, Faith, Courage and Sacrifices of the pioneer Lutheran Pastors, The Rev. Samuel Schwerdtfeger and the Reverend Herman Hayunga and the faithful Christian men and women who established this Evangelical Lutheran Church. A grateful membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada has erected this monument."

lish and finally wholly in English.

His health compelled him to resign his charge in 1827, but he con-

tinued to reside in Williamsburg township and served in vacation and other intervals, as the head school. He died in 1871 and is buried in St. John's cemetery, Riverside.

Government Gives Grant

In 1848 the Government granted the Lutherans of Williamsburg 23,000 and 27½ acres of land to compensate for the loss of their former holdings.

Present St. John's

The present St. John's Church was erected in 1863 and the congregation to-day is made up largely of descendants of the original hardy settlers who strove to establish a Christian settlement. They were a hardy race, used to hardships and long, travelling miles through forest trails and on the river to obtain the necessary supplies. Their days were full and their labours arduous, but, with all, they still had time for worship. Religion for them was a vital need, something for which they were willing to make personal sacrifices, to give of their time and scanty means to keep it alive and flourishing.

J. E. LEFEBVRE  
B.A., D.C.  
Chiropractor  
139 Pitt Street Phone 1789

DON'T FORGET!

SAT.  
JULY 9th  
CORNWALL  
HIGHLAND  
GAMES

ONLY

*Lamp*

GIVES YOU-

LICENSED

CLEANER

**ED. PARKER**

332 Pitt Street  
Telephone 406

Plumbing Contractor

Hot Water and Steam heating, Hot Air Heating and General Repairs. We carry a good stock of Enamelware and Pipe and Pipe Fittings. Brass Goods and Galvanized Iron.

George Dreyfus  
Lrg  
notes

ES  
BLIQUES

CANADA