

United Evangelical To Mark 100th An

By Joan Wheatley

A century ago, German was spoken in the little red schoolhouse in Canton. Pedestrians walked in clay and mud to cross the corners of East avenue and Dillon street where it stood. On the horizon were woods and swamps, farms and hills.

The one-story schoolhouse was the setting for the formation of the present United Evangelical Church, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary September 14.

Citizens of German extraction, who were farmers, laborers, business and dairy men 100 years ago, grew weary of traveling a long distance to the nearest German Church. They met in the school house in September, 1873, to organize the German United Evangelical Church of Canton, after engaging the Rev. Andrew Schwartz, who was also a doctor of medicine, to be their pastor.

It took only three days to organize, name the church and its trustees, and to agree to build a church beside the schoolhouse.

Trustees, services, pastors, buildings, and even the language have changed. The present pastor, the Rev. Paul A. Rasche is the sixth to lead the congregation.

Among his 800 parishioners are 3d and 4th generations of the founders, who will

participate in the month-long anniversary celebration in September.

The oldest living member is Mrs. Lillie Blimline. She and Mrs. Bertha James, Gustav Keller and Fred Scheffel, all still on the membership rosters, were born before the schoolhouse burned in March, 1885. Mrs. Elizabeth Dillfelder was a member before English was first spoken in the church in 1894.

Other family names on membership lists since the first days are Gluth, Sauer, Schmidt, Lenning and Becker.

To refresh memories and give younger generations a sense of church history, the anniversary committee, headed by J. Edwin Myers, plans to display memorabilia. It is hoped photographs will include each of the 100 confirmation classes. There will be anniversary programs, and movies from the past 20 years.

When the church was formed, with about 50 families in the congregation, Canton was in the county. City firefighters watched the schoolhouse burn from across the street, because they were not permitted to cross the dividing line, then the center of East avenue.

A new corner building, soon erected, was used for Sunday School and a social hall until 1936, when the present hall was built on the other side of the church.

The Rev. Paul Menzel replaced Pastor Schwartz who retired in 1889. Five years

later, Pastor Menzel began confirmation instruction, traditionally given in German, in English. He also originated midweek Lenten services before resigning in 1896.

The third pastor, the Rev. William Batz, served nearly 30 years, until his death in 1926. Because of his long tenure, the church was referred to as the "Batz church." During his years, 104 feet of ground was purchased, the Young People's League was formed and art windows installed.

It was while the Rev. Franklin W. Schaefer served from 1926 to 1934 that the church became affiliated with the Evangelical Synod of North America.

Not until after a seminary student, Ernest Press served the congregation the first four months of 1934 did the Rev. Titus Lehmann become fifth pastor. That April a new hall was started and, soon after its dedication, the present parsonage cornerstone was laid May 23, 1937.

This building now stands where the schoolhouse was. By the 70th anniversary, that building mortgage was burned and a fund started for a new church.

Mr. Lehmann was there when the present church was dedicated in December, 1957, after completion for approximately \$300,000.

During his 26 years, Pastor Lehmann instituted morning service in English,

although some German was used as late as 1958.

While commemorating the anniversary, the church will hold a fund-raising drive for improvements and its college scholarship fund.

Programs will cover the church history, the present, and what is in the future. Since the anniversary date is a Friday, a Mardi Gras will be held then, with square dancing included in the fellowship night.

Festivities will begin with special communion services September 9. Homecoming and a reunion of confirmation classes will be September 16. Former interim pastor, Dr. Ernest Press, now serving St. Johns United Evangelical Church, Evansville, Ind., will discuss "The Past" that day.

Community dignitaries and neighboring ministers will be guests at a community night September 21, when photographs, mementos and movies will be viewed.

The primary celebration will be September 23. The guest speaker is Dr. Paul Lehmann, nephew of Titus Lehmann and faculty member of Union Theological Seminary, New York. His theme is "The Present."

A gala banquet at Eastwind, with an anticipated attendance of 500, will be held September 29. September 30, a chancel drama, "The Challenge of The Cross," will be presented.

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