

This Prairie Land

# Moving Day

Zion II, loaded on the big moving timbers and on its way to its location at the Simeon Henke farm on August 30, 1978—east and south of where it once stood. Moving was done by Glaesman Moving Co. of Leola, South Dakota.



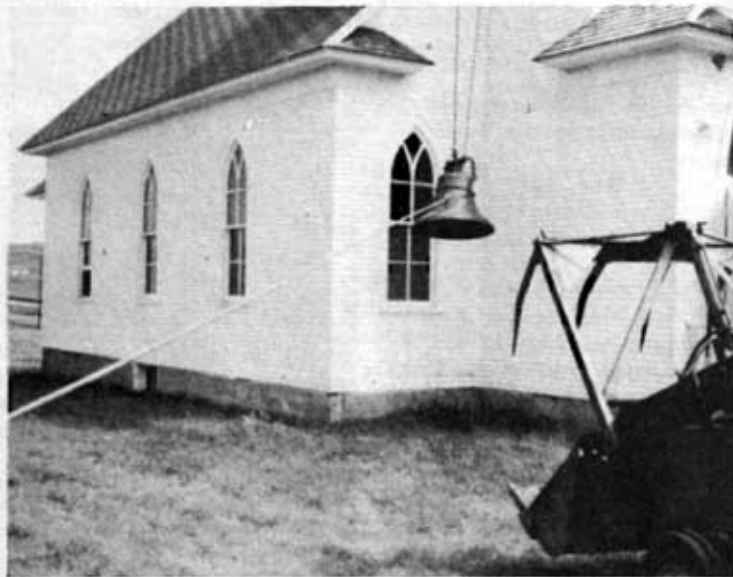
When old country church was moved away, members of congregation recalled events of the church's early days.

The congregation of Zion II had its closing service on May 14, 1978 with Dr. Nelson Preus, bishop of the Eastern North Dakota District, preaching.

The church has a long history. It was started in 1894. At the beginning, church was held in the homes but as more people settled in the area they knew they needed a bigger place in which to worship. Then a church was built of sod. This was the most popular building material in those days. The sod church stood until 1929, when the present church was built.

Henry and Carl Huether were the carpenters, and the basement was dug out by church members. The work was done with horses and old-time dirt scrapers. The lumber was hauled by horses and wagons from the Fredonia Lumber Co. You can be sure that it took a pretty good team of horses to haul a good load of lumber the 18 miles from Fredonia, North Dakota. This was done by the members too, each taking their turns as the materials were needed. The cornerstone was laid on June 9th. The church was completed in September and on the 19th the dedication service was held with Rev. Bergstedt as pastor. Lunch was served in the old sod church. It had served the people well. That fall it was torn down.

**T**he congregation now had a new church. Everyone had helped in some way. Even the women of the church had saved their egg money and bought the cross which stood high on the steeple. Everyone thought the cross was a beautiful contribution to the church. The



Removing the bell from the steeple in September 1978.



The chancel at Zion II reflected the architectural simplicity of the early prairie period.

## Wood and coal heated the church in the old days.

church itself was a reminder of what people can really do when they work together.

At one time there were six churches in a 20-mile radius served by one pastor. He lived at the parsonage located south across the road from Peace Lutheran Church (Sackmann or Schumacher church). The pastor conducted services in each congregation every fifth Sunday. In those days, each pastor drove a horse and buggy.

Many times the weather kept them from getting to the church. Then the services were in the afternoons or evenings. The pastors were always treated well as the members would always invite him to a meal, and then on his way home they would send along eggs or meat as a gesture of appreciation.



**J.F. Schneider removing the cornerstone and the papers which were earlier put in the box. Schneider was the only charter member still a member when the church closed. He was there when the cornerstone was laid and when it was removed. This was just before the church was moved in August 1978.**

One of the most important jobs at Zion was probably the janitor's job. In the early days, it was a major job to fire up the old wood and coal furnace before Sunday services. Just ask any old-timer what a job it was to get a good fire going and then

keep it going through the night so that the church would be cozy and warm. For many years Fred Weszner was the janitor as he lived only one-fourth mile from the church. In the late 50s, a new fuel furnace was put in and that made Fred's job much easier.

**T**he six churches were as follows: Peace (Schumacher) Lutheran, Zion I (Bertsch), Zion II (Biederstaedt), Hoffnungs (Schmidt), Hoffman church and Quaschnick church. The latter three were closed in the late 1930s or early 1940s because of declining membership. The Hoffman church building was moved to the John Hoffman farm, and is still used as a farm house where Gary and Elaine Hoffman and family now live.

Along in 1943 Rev. E.H. Vetter came to serve the three remaining churches. He was a man who loved singing. It was then that a choir was begun in each church. In small churches that included just about

## Landmarks in the history of Zion II Lutheran Church

Sod church started in 1896 . . . Membership of 18 families  
About 1900 . . . . . Membership of 27 families

(149 baptized persons)

At closing, in 1978 . . . . . Membership of 12 families  
(45 baptized persons)

A total of 286 baptisms were performed at Zion II Lutheran Church; marriages—41; burials from 1895 to 1915—49, (no record for 1916-1929), burials from 1930 to 1979—28, for a total of 77.

Congregation merged with American Lutheran Church denomination on April 12, 1959, and joined with Martin Luther Church in Fredonia, North Dakota in

hiring a pastor.

### Pastors who served at Zion II:

A. Meyries 1897-1905; H. Timmke 1905-1908; W. Siefkes 1909-1910; A. Kelpke 1910-1914; H.L. Lechner 1914-1918; F. Lehner 1919-1921; D. Bergstedt 1922-1933; J. Huetmeyer 1934-1939; A.G. Doering 1939; E.J. Voss 1940-1942; E.H. Vetter 1943-1947; J. Huetmeyer 1947-1950; H.L. Lechner 1950-1952; W. Gevers 1952-1955; R. Heupel 1955-1957; H. Vorrath 1957-1959; E. Thellen 1959-1960; R. Heidtke 1960-1963; J. Hunter 1963-1966; L.R. Mentink 1966-1968; M. Lapp 1968-1970; L. Vigen 1971-1974; and J.K. Olson 1974-1978.

everyone! Each choir sang at their respective church and for special occasions they got together to sing. This was usually at the fall missionfest services.

Missionfest was a special day in rural Zion II. In the fall, when the harvest was in and money was the most readily available, services were in the morning and afternoon—with

the noon meal prepared in the homes. And what a meal it was! The feast usually consisted of baked ham, duck, goose, chicken, halupsy, hot potato salad, goulash, stuffed peppers, homemade bread topped with homemade butter and jelly and then, of course, kuchen, blachinda, pies of every kind, and cakes too. The guests at missionfest

Sunday certainly had banquets fit for kings and queens.

Probably another of the important events of Zion II was the yearly Christmas program. Planning started in November. The Sunday school superintendent gathered the material and at the first Sunday afternoon practice, everyone got their parts. This



Choirs sing outside for special worship services in the 1950s.

Everybody brought food for Harvest Sunday.



Three church choir begun in 1947 by Rev. Vetter—top, l. to r.: Enoch Nitschke, Gottfried Bertsch, Albert Bertsch, August Schumacher, Edwin Neu, Gottlieb Sackmann, and J.F. Schneider.

Middle: Ollie Sackmann, Estella Neu, Ruth Kessel, Elsie Bertsch, Sophia Nitschke, Maggie Sackmann—organist.

Front: Director—George Rothfusz, Emma Bertsch, Christine Fregien, Marie Schneider, Mary Schneider, Anna Maier, and Hannah Maier.

included every age. Big and little ones. The program consisted of recitations, dialouges, plays, songs, and special numbers. Some of the recitations and songs were said and sung in German. Anyone who has ever belonged to a small rural church knows the feeling of sitting

together with Martin Luther Church at Fredonia, North Dakota, while Rev. E. Theilen was pastor. Rev. Theilen was the last pastor to conduct services in the German language.



inside a small church at Christmas-time, hearing a little child recite a German poem or singing a carol in German.

On April 12, 1959, Zion II merged with The American Lutheran Church and also joined

**F**or 49 years Zion II stood. On June 22, 1978, the auction sale was held and everything was sold except the bell.

Using long ropes, a long REA pole and manpower, the bell was taken down from Zion II's stately steeple. As the writer of this article, I have mixed feelings. In one way, I'm glad that everyone was here to help remove the bell so it could be put permanently on the same spot that the church once stood. In another way I disliked seeing the bell removed because it meant we would not hear the bell ringing

Church was a landmark located on a hill.

throughout the countryside.

On the morning of August 30, Zion II was moved from its familiar spot just below the rolling hills to the north. It will be missed by many people for a long time. It was always used to give directions to people unfamiliar in the area.

Many times when pastors came from Fredonia for services, they would comment on how beautiful the church was as one came over the hills—and then seeing the little church standing proudly in the valley. □

Janice Bertsch, the writer of this article, was a member of the rural congregation called Zion II.