

Brief History of the St. Paul Lutheran (German Lutheran) Church Building, Garnavillo, Iowa

In 1853-54, the congregation built their first church building, a frame structure 30' x 40', for a cost of about \$2,500 on lots 2 and 7 of Block 15 Garnavillo. (Only lots 1 and 8 on the block were not owned by the congregation.) Block 15 is bounded by Adams Street to the east, Van Buren to the south, Rutland to the west, and Niagra to the north. The interior of the church was very bare and materially simplistic. Hymns were accompanied by a "harmonium" (a small reed organ) in the rear of the church. References indicate that Johann Heinrich Moellering drew the plans for the first St. Paul's Church. In 1855 a fence around the church was added. On November 3, 1878, the first church was destroyed by fire (some resources state 1876, verified by newspaper article was 1878). In Nov 1878 (prior to or after the fire?), the congregation had ordered a church bell weighing 523 lbs from Troy N.Y. for a cost of \$167.48 plus freight \$9.65 delivered to Clayton, Iowa on December 9, 1878.

The second church building, also a wood frame building, 40'x65', was erected in 1879-80 at a cost of \$5,254 (some resources state \$4,000). It included a balcony. A two-manual Keller tracker system pipe organ was installed in 1880 and placed in the south west corner of the church. In 1885, the balcony expanded and the organ moved to the balcony. Sometime between 1894 and 1908, stained glass windows were added, and the walls and ceilings decorated with religious drawings. Six of the apostles were given places between the windows; three on the north wall, three on the south.

In 1914-15 a central Gothic arch and smaller arches on each side were added to the west chancel wall and the entire interior was decorated in a style conforming to the windows and arches. New were the altar panel with the Lord's Supper (after Leonardo Da Vinci) and a canopied pulpit with panels of St. Matthew and St. John. They were built by Max Bahls, an experience cabinet maker out of the old benches which had been discarded for new ones. The lectern was made by Pastor K Wm Braun who was serving at the time. The apostles who had been on the walls since 1893 were obliterated. A baptismal font was later placed in front of the south arch and the reed organ (from the Sunday School) was placed in the north arch. Later a decision was made to move the pipe organ to the front of the church in the central arch behind the altar making it necessary to build an extension toward the west to accommodate the organ case and also serve as a sacristy.

In 1928, the Wicks Pipe Organ Company rebuilt the two-manual tracker pipe organ into a three-manual direct electric action pipe organ with 2,000 pipes, pedal, and echo division. An altar rail was also added about this time. The statue of Christ, sculptured from genuine Carian marble and the imported alabaster vases were added in the late 30's to early 40's. In 1940, a full basement and a rear addition to the church were added to enhance kitchen and Sunday School space. In 1947, the Tower Music System was dedicated as a memorial to the service men of World War II. In 1951-52 the church interior was completely remodeled and a second rear addition was built and a narthex added for a total cost of \$41,000. Choir lofts were added, the chancel was enlarged, and a new pulpit, lectern, baptismal font and ministerial chairs of light oak were installed. In 1970, new light oak pews and kneelers were installed. And in 1971, the church basement was completely remodeled for about \$30,000. In 1977-78, the church narthex was replaced and enlarged for about \$46,000. The Eva Ihde property north of the church was purchased in 1980, resulting in all lots on block 15 belonging to the congregation. In 1994, a handicapped elevator was installed at a cost of \$60,000. In 2000, air conditioning was installed and a vote to repair the organ at a cost of \$53,195 was passed.

The first **parsonage**, built in 1854, was 36' x 18', a large roomy structure with school room space on the west half of the second floor accessible by an outside stairway. In 1908, a second parsonage was built at a cost of \$2,225 by Albert Wagner. The old parsonage was dismantled and much of the material utilized to build a parochial **school house** furnished with comfortable seats and a reed organ and a bell in the belfry. The school sat between the church and the parsonage but further towards the west. In 1952, the school house was sold to Andy Puelz and moved off the church property (its final resting place - Osborne Nature Center). In 1961-62, the existing parsonage was moved to the east side of Garnavillo along Centre Street and a third parsonage was built for a cost of \$25,000.

Compiled March 28, 2017, by Jane Thein, Garnavillo Historical Society

Sources: St. Paul Anniversary Book History Accounts: 1903, 1928, 1953, 1978, 2003; Garnavillo Gem of the Prairie; 1882 History of Clayton County; Elkader Register Nov 7, 1878 (fire)