

Chapter 3: The Growing and Formative Years (1870-1910)

Roy C. Nilsen, Zion's pastor from 1980-1998, quotes the following in his "Zion Lutheran Church: An Historical Sketch" which appeared on the back of the Zion 125th Anniversary Record Album cover:

The deep concern of the Zion members for mission came to the fore in the spring of 1870. At that time, mission or preaching stations were begun in South Liberty, West Branch, Solon, and Sharon Center. A short time later, work was begun in Lone Tree, Cedar Rapids, Oxford, Homestead, and North Liberty. Zion became the support for the number of mission endeavors through the early years of its life.

This total of nine areas of mission endeavor speaks well for the faith and industry of the young congregation. The Reverend J.G. Hoerlein noted in his Year Book (Appendix A) that his father, J. C. Hoerlein (Zion's pastor from 1870 to 1873) had begun in 1870 to conduct services every fortnight in the afternoon in a schoolhouse four miles northwest of Solon. A few years later a congregation was organized. After meeting in an abandoned Presbyterian Church in Solon, land was purchased in the "southwest portion of that burg and erected thereon was a neat little frame church, fully equipped with a sweet toned bell".

The future of the little church was in doubt, due to "deaths, removal of members to other localities and other causes, (The Bohemians taking overhand), but nevertheless very energetic and more active than many congregations twice or three times its size". Services were conducted in German every other Sunday afternoon at two o' clock. Hoerlein notes that, with the exception of a very short time when Gottlieb C. Mardorf was pastor, "the congregation has always been served regularly and faithfully by the pastors of the mother church".

In 1955 the church building was moved to Iowa City (see article on the following page). The former church (photo below) is presently located at 917 N. Dodge Street in Iowa City.



Solon's Pastor
Gottlieb C. Mardorf

1955,

Local Congregation To Have New Home— Move Old Solon Lutheran Church Building to City

The Church of Christ, served here by Evangelist Edward De Bree, soon will have a new home—although the building is probably more than 70 years old.

The congregation purchased the old Solon German Evangelical Lutheran Zion church and moved it to Iowa City. It will be located on a North Dodge street site next to the Iowa Water Service Co. standpipe there.

Before obtaining this permanent house of worship, the Church of Christ held services in the Community building. Since it burned, services have been held in the memorial union.

The church structure was built in 1882, but has been vacant for several years.

IT HAD BEEN purchased about five years ago by Levi Hipp of Solon, who lived next door and, when the church was up for sale, bought it to secure the lot. He sold it to the Iowa City congregation.

Before moving the church to Iowa City, the steeple was removed. Otherwise, the structure, which measures 20 by 32 feet, is intact.

A new vestibule will be added across the front, and the congregation hopes to have the church in use as soon as possible.

ACCORDING TO THE title abstract possessed by Mr. Hipp, the following facts are known about the Solon church and its land history.

The church stood on what was once an 80-acre tract of land bought April 17, 1843 from the United States government by Hamilton H. Kerr.

On August 11, 1866, Mr. Kerr sold the church land to Andersphus J. Beuter.

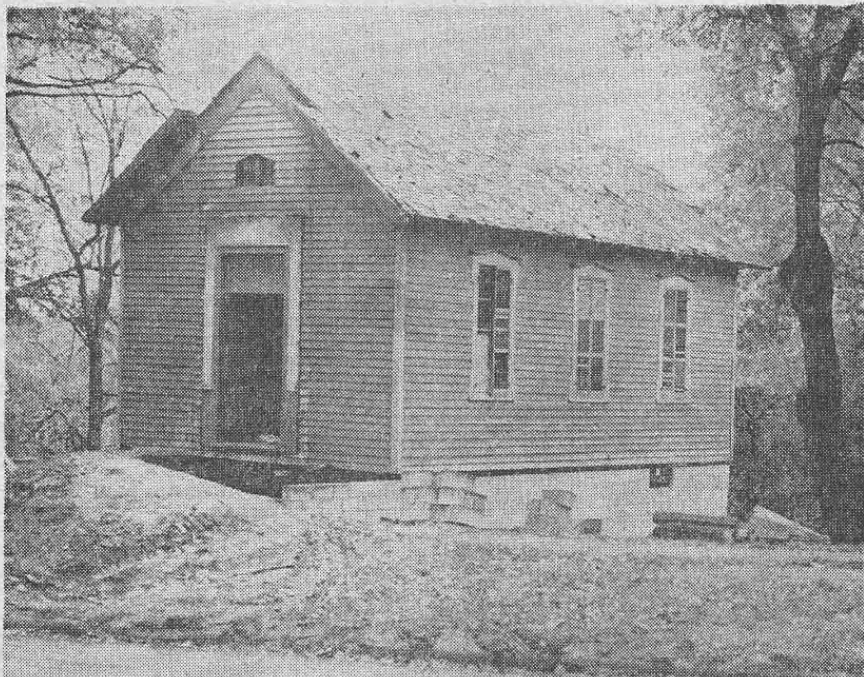
A warranty deed dated Sept. 26, 1882, conveys lots three and four in block three of Beuter's third addition to Solon to Henry Hertz et al, representing trustees of "German Lutheran Zions Congregation."

On March 4, 1930, the church decided to dispose of one of its two lots, and it was sold to Lena Apitz. This was lot three and later was purchased by Mr. Hipp.

A NOVEMBER 7, 1949 report of the meeting of the board of trustees indicates the fate of the Solon church. The Rev. A. C. Proehl, pastor of Zion Lutheran in Iowa City, served as secretary at that session.

It was decided to dispose of the property and to disband the dwindling congregation. Proceeds from the sale of the property would be given to the American Lutheran church, of which Zion in Solon was an affiliate.

Mr. Hipp was the eventual buyer.



Being moved onto its new foundation on North Dodge street, is the old German Evangelical Lutheran Zion church of Solon, purchased and moved here by the Church of Christ. The old steeple which stood in the front of the building was removed. A new vestibule will be added across the front. Evangelist Edward De Bree serves the congregation. (Press-Citizen Photo.)

Reverend Hoerlein (the father) also founded the Sharon Center congregation as a mission in 1870. He conducted services in Willow Grove Schoolhouse. In July of 1875 land was purchased and “a frame church 26’ x 40’ was erected”. The Sharon Center church in 1975, members of the congregation (left photo) and Pastor Trost (right photo) are pictured below. More information and pictures may be found in Appendix K..



Zion undertook two major projects in 1870. The first was the reduction of the nearly \$1200 debt. Success was recognized in this area due to the generous contributions by members to the debt retirement fund. The second major effort was completed in the fall of 1870 when a balcony was added to the church to increase seating capacity. Records tell us of the pride the congregation felt in their church and its accomplishments. With the reduction of the debt and improvements to the church, the members also noted an increase in the value of the church property. Iowa City land values were estimated to be about \$15 per acre.

Also added to Zion was a new pulpit and altar. This altar, referred to now as “the old altar,” stands in the fellowship hall at the present time, one of Zion’s treasures still serving the congregation as it did 140 years ago.

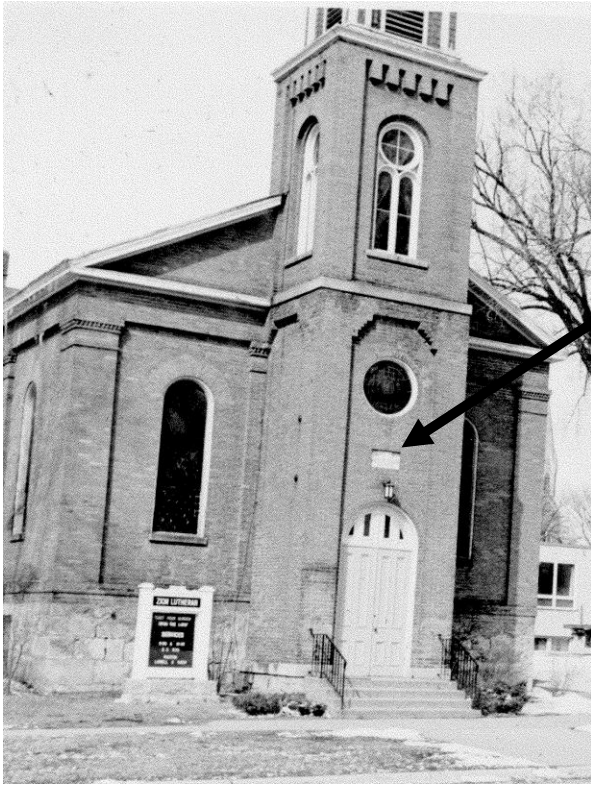


On October 17, 1873, Reverend J. C. Hoerlein passed away while serving Zion. An overview of the Hoerlein family history as compiled by great grandson, Paul Hoerlein, may be found in Appendix C. The Reverend Leonhardt Paeverlein served Zion temporarily until Pastor Conrad Ide answered Zion's call in 1874.

A popular weekly German Republican paper, *The Volksfreund*, was started in 1874, and was read by Zion members. Edited and published by Henry Brede, it boasted a circulation of 650 copies in Iowa City and Johnson County. It was an eight column, four page publication, and "was the oldest German paper published in Johnson County", according to *The History of Johnson County*, published in 1883. The paper discusses the severe winter of 1874-1875:

There was so little employment for the laboring people, such a severe winter and so much destitution, that a soup house was opened and kept up by the benevolent people of the city. . .

Surely there is a lesson for those of us at Zion today in the above report, for today members of Zion support a soup kitchen in Iowa City - 135 years later.



Plans to build a bell tower and narthex at Zion were realized with its completion in 1875 at a cost of \$1500.

The stone which was mounted above the door is pictured below.



Evangelical Lutheran Holy Zions Church

Note: ST. is an abbreviation for the Latin "Sanctus" meaning "Holy"

Bob Moninger reports how the capstone was "discovered":

One day - probably in the late 1970s - at Herb Gartsky's place on Friendship Street while talking to him about improvements in Iowa City of which he and his brother Fred thought the paving of Rocky Shore Drive was right up there among the best I happened to notice the step-stone by his side garage door which appeared to be very smooth Indiana limestone on which I commented which led Herb to turn over the stone making visible the lettering and numbers of the old Zion door cap-stone which led in turn to Fred and Herb telling stories of putting buckets of water over the basement entrance at Zion set to empty upon Pastor Hoerlein when he followed them out after school.

I bought the stone from Herb who had bought it from Max Yocum who had bought the whole old church building.

The capstone can currently be found in the narthex.

The Zion Sunday School was reorganized in 1878. J. G. Hoerlein (see Appendix A) noted the date as February, writing "a thriving Sunday School" was to be found.

Pastor Conrad Ide left Zion in 1879 and the Reverend Ocian Hartmann began his duties the same year. Once again Zion had a new pastor, and Hartmann would witness many improvements in his eight years as Zion's spiritual leader.

In the early 1880's beautiful stained glass windows were installed at Zion. Friends and families presented some of the windows as memorials. No lists remain of the donors but the windows bore the names of those being memorialized. The following is a list from Herman F. Schroeder's "A Brief History of Zion Lutheran Church":

George L. Ruppert	Louise Opel
Emilie Lowenstein	Jacob Barth
Johann C. Hormel	Gerhardt Otte
Elisabeth Hormel	

Efforts were made by some members of Zion to preserve the windows when the old church was demolished in 1964, but sufficient funds could not be raised, a time extension was not granted, and the windows were sold to Max Yocum along with the rest of the church building. He sold them to various buyers. Happily, the investigations for the history discovered that the windows still exist, preserved and cared for by their purchaser, in whose home they now reside. Two of the windows have been mounted in wooden frames, and the remaining five have been used in a folding screen as a room divider. We are grateful to the individual who salvaged the windows from extinction and for sharing the above information with us. Those of us at Zion whose families presented the memorial windows and all Zion members who remember them may rejoice in the knowledge that they still exist and are as beautiful as ever. For those who never saw the windows, we include a brief description as accurate as possible considering the length of time passed since the author (Patti Mott) and other Zion members have seen them.

On the east side of the church one window featured a brunette angel holding a gilded scroll and standing by a river. Another featured curves and designs in blue, gold, and other support colors. Another pictured a crown of thorns surrounded by a gold crown, symbolizing Christ's victory over death. One of the windows pictured a lamb framed by a golden crown. The windows on the west side of the church were equally lovely and were composed of artistically compatible colors in jewel-like tones showing various old Christian and Lutheran symbols.

The one window from the old church that Zion still owns is the Good Shepherd window which is framed and hangs over the center aisle in the gallery. Garbed in a white robe and red tunic, the Good Shepherd holds a lamb in one arm and a staff in the other. Other lambs and palm trees may be seen in the background as He stands in a "green pasture". The theme of the window is David's Twenty-Third Psalm. This window has always been called "The Good Shepherd Window" by Zion members. In the old church it was high above the altar near the ceiling on the north wall and was the first thing one looked to when entering the church. The window was found in the basement sometime in the late 1970's by Pastor Richard L. Trost and Gladys Lumsden, Zion's security person. They found a Cedar Rapids artisan who knew the style of leading used in the window. Al Stieglitz made a steel band to encase the window. After completion, it was hung in Zion's gallery to the delight of many. (Perhaps of interest is that the window is presently hanging "backwards" as viewed from inside the Nave. The picture below is taken from the back of the gallery as it should correctly be viewed.)



The decade of the 1880's may be described as "years that the congregation used to improve the church building". In addition to the stained glass windows, new vases for altar flowers were obtained.

In 1881, members of Zion had to do some extra labor in Zion's basement in June and July. A report in *The State Press* told of the worst storm of the rainy season, which hit Iowa City on Monday night, June 29, 1881:

Monday night's rainfall was the heaviest ever known here. The storm broke upon the city at about midnight, gently at first, and all the time without wind, but with water fall of increasing intensity, until there were no raindrops, for it came in solid sheets.

The article points out that the most damage was done (aside from the filling of uptown cellars) "to the lines of Ralston Creek and Market run. The damage on Market run, aside from some extensive chicken drowning, began at Bloomington Street in the destruction of sidewalks and bridges". Further details of damage in the church area continued:

The stream (Ralston Creek)...carried off the sidewalk bridge on the Avenue (Iowa Avenue) at Mr. E. Hughes', flooded the gardens, rose midsides to the horses in Mr. Welch's stable on Mr. Patterson's lot, swept Mr. Beranek's garden at the Johnson Street crossing, and rose to a depth of eighteen inches in his house. The damage on Market Street swept out the old stone arch bridge built in 1857 by Starkey and Boartz.

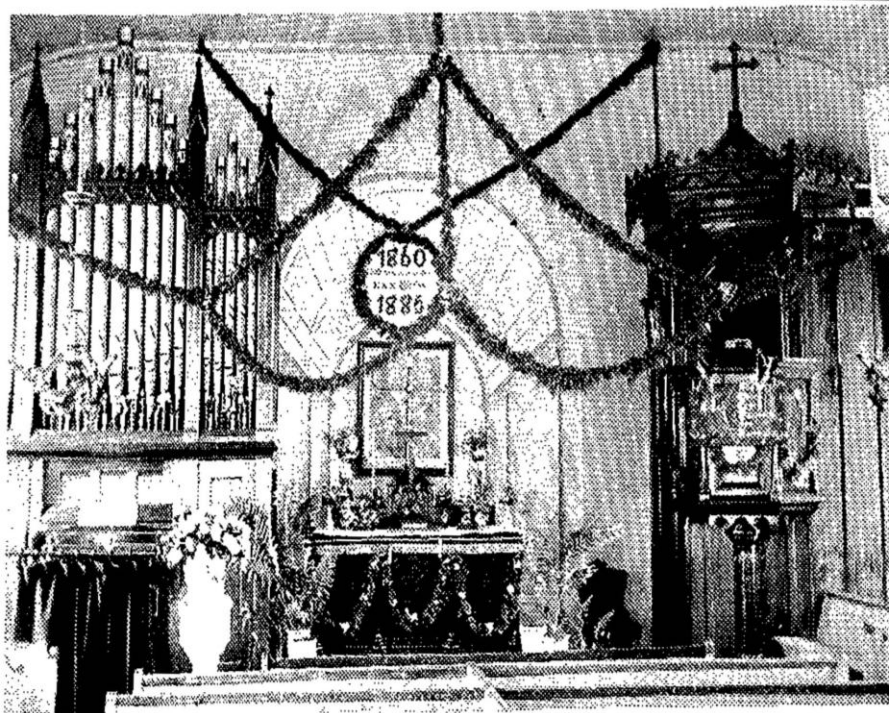
Records say nothing of damage to Zion's grounds, but we do know there was "quite a lot" of water in the church basement. Members used buckets to "bail out" the rain water, forming a "bucket brigade" up the steps of the church basement. After a concerted effort, the basement was fairly dry, but continued rains caused a dampness problem that lasted through the summer. Damage to city property was estimated at about \$1000, and the amount assessed to private property was about \$5000.

On Saturday night, July 9, 1881, a heavy rain fell on Iowa City. The next day the local drainage had raised the river nearly fourteen feet. It rose as the rains from towns upstream surged down toward the

city, and by Wednesday, July 13, it was twenty-two and one-half feet above the low water level, had cut off travel on the bridges, and the river had expanded to five miles in width in some areas both north and south of Iowa City. The flood swept 200 miles of bottomlands from its starting point near Marshalltown, and farms along the river were laid waste. Many homes and businesses in Coralville suffered extensive damage. Nearly twenty Iowa City families were forced to leave their homes and seek higher ground. The Zion “bucket brigade” went into action once again. The History of Johnson County confirms reports from Zion family accounts concerning “the crazy weather” of 1882, bringing further hardship to Iowa City.

Zion’s 25th Anniversary was observed in 1885. All that exists in the church files is an old, faded picture of the interior of the church as it was decorated for the celebration. The altar appears adorned with assorted sizes and shapes of vases filled with flowers. Zion’s marble baptismal font holds a large container of flowers, obviously fresh-cut from some member’s garden. The organ is decked with twelve small assorted bud vases of flowers, carefully spaced between the pipes. Ferns may be seen at each side of the altar. The lower altar is decorated with sweeping garlands of greenery and flowers. The pulpit appears to have been similarly adorned. Long garlands hung from the ceiling, criss-cross above the altar. Hanging from one garland and perfectly centered over the altar there hung a round sign encircled with matching garland greenery which read:

“Siehe, ich bin bei euch alle Tage, bis an der Welt Ende.”
(Lo, I am with you all days, until the end of the world)



The numbers 1860 for our birth year appeared above the scripture, and 1885 for the anniversary year are just beneath it. The picture above shows the front of the Nave before the addition of the apse and transept in 1889. Although we have no program preserved from the celebration, we have it on good authority that “a basket dinner” followed the German service, and was held on the church lawn. Knowing the Zion traditions of Fourth of July picnics and the Annual Congregational Summer

Picnics that have been so popular through the years, we can assume that one was held, and that it was well-attended.



The marble baptismal font we use today is the same one pictured in the 1885 photo (left).

The exact date of acquisition of the font is not known. An expert stone craftsman originally from Germany, John Uhlrich Miller (Miller Monument), created the font.

In celebration of Zion's 25th Anniversary, a new pipe organ was installed in 1885. It was purchased from the Moline Organ Company, and had one manual and one pedal keyboard. The bench from this organ is presently in the narthex and is used to hold bulletins.



Pastor Ocian Hartmann left Iowa City in 1887. J.G. Hoerlein, son of J. C. Hoerlein, returned to Zion as our pastor on November 3, 1887. His return was propitious for Zion's growth and development.

In 1889, a large addition was added to the front of the church increasing Zion's seating area. The church was further improved by the purchase of "new comfortable pews", in the words of Herman F. Schroeder, a long time member. A new furnace, carpeting and Nave and Chancel frescos were also added at a cost of \$3000.

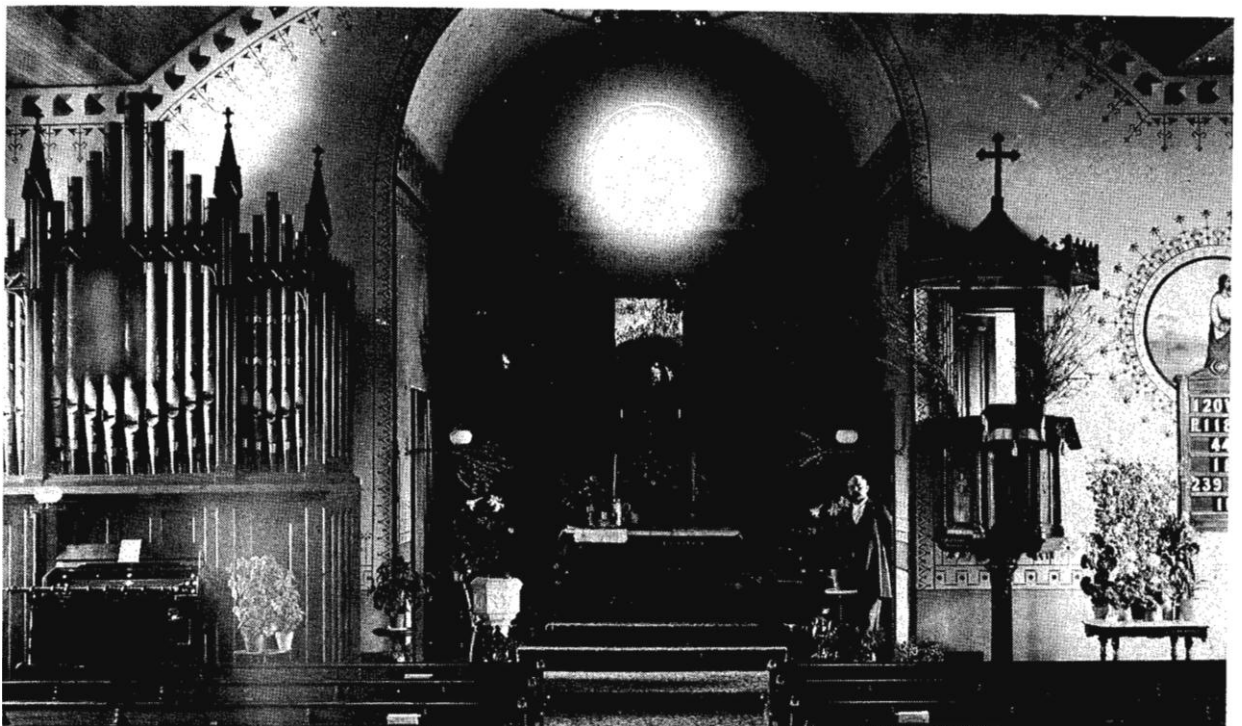
According to J.G. Hoerlein (see Appendix A), in 1889 Zion's daily parochial school was changed to a Saturday and Summer school offering only German and religious instructions, conducted by the pastor. The summer sessions lasted eight weeks and had an average attendance of 40 to 50 scholars.

Zion and Pastor J.G. Hoerlein had certain expectations concerning Sunday School attendance, as did the Zion parents: "Unless you are dying, you go!" Weather didn't matter, social events didn't count at all, and we're told that no amount of pleading or faking illness was acceptable. Old records show many perfect attendance records year after year. Pastor Hoerlein wrote:

Our Catechumens "are expected to visit the school regularly without interruption from their 7th or 8th year on until confirmation, at the age of about 14, attending besides regular catechetical instructions twice or three times a week from November until Easter for two seasons. Thus it may be seen that the German Lutheran Church is faithful to the Lord's command to teach His Word to the best of her ability as circumstances permit.

He added that "private instructions will be arranged for those of riper years upon application."

Helen Mott and Louise Munkhoff recalled the trepidation each youngster felt as Confirmation Day approached. "All kids had to survive a questioning when the pastor quizzed each one in German before the Zion congregation. Answers were given back in German and woe to the youngster who hadn't memorized everything!" Munkhoff remembered.



Pastor J. G. Hoerlein in the Chancel in the 1890's

In 1893, a new parsonage was built to the east of the church at a cost of \$2,200. A new furnace was purchased for the church, and sidewalks were laid (we're told this made the Ladies Aid very happy, as they planned to buy new carpets for the church- again). The mud brought in on boots and shoes shortened the life of carpeting, and it was hoped the new sidewalks would greatly reduce the problem. The Ladies Aid paid \$800 later in the year to install the new carpets and to have the church freshly frescoed.

Pastor J.G. Hoerlein, as his father before him, had a great appreciation for Zion's history and kept meticulous records. Realizing the need to preserve Zion's history, Hoerlein began work on a brief historical sketch of the church in 1906. Published late in the year in Iowa City, it provides a wealth of information for us (Appendix A). The pamphlet was financed by selling advertising.





Zion approached its 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee triumphant and prosperous- the entire Zion debt had been paid! Paper reports tell us the sun shone on Zion on a beautiful, warm, Indian Summer Sunday (October 16, 1910) when The Golden Anniversary was celebrated, and “The entire community rejoiced with the German Lutherans in their happiness”.

A lengthy article detailed Zion’s Semi-Centennial. Our history was given and credit awarded to Pastor Hoerlein for his efforts. It was noted that J. G. Hoerlein was the oldest pastor in Iowa City at that time, and had been at Zion 23 years, longer than any other. The following is a quote from the lengthy article:

The services tomorrow will include exercises in both German and English, the morning service being entirely in German and the evening service in English. The morning service will begin at 10:45. The organ prelude will be played by Hans Hoerlein. The president of the Synod, Reverend E. Richter, D.D., will deliver the sermon. Reverend C. Ide, a former pastor of the congregation, will give an address, and Reverend Hoerlein, the present pastor, will read a brief history of the congregation. There will also be special music by the choir.

The ladies of the church will serve lunch to all visitors and members of the church at noon. The evening services will begin at 7:30, and will be conducted by Reverend C. Rausch.

The Iowa City Citizen of Saturday, October 15, 1910, gave a large portion of its front page coverage to Zion. (A framed newspaper can be viewed in the parish hall.)

IOWA CITY CITIZEN THE
CITIZEN

IOWA CITY, IOWA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1910.

SUE FOR \$10,000.00

RES FOR FUND-ADJOURNED

BANK BUYS

1928, 1929, and 1930, and success of Council held Meeting Last


meeting of the board of directors of the fund-adjourned council. These bonds are not maturing until 1938, 1939 and 1940. The bank has bought \$10,000 of these bonds and advanced the balance of the purchase price.

Frank Neukirch, president of the fund-adjourned council, reported \$495.38 for the grading on the lot between Linn and Harrison streets.


Byron Schmitt, secretary, reported for any building the alley adjoining the lot. He had already received the plan of the alley. The council will meet again on Oct. 22.

CASH FOREHEAD

A Group of Former German Lutheran Pastors



REV. J. HOERLEIN
Father of the Present Pastor
1870-1873



REV. O. HARTMAN
1870-1887



REV. C. HEE
1874-1879

WILL OBSERVE ANNIVERSARY

German Lutheran Congregation will Celebrate Semi-Centennial.

The German Lutheran church of this city will tomorrow observe the semi-centennial anniversary of its birth. Just fifty years ago, in the spring of 1860, the site of the present church building was purchased and before the Christmas of 1861 the building was dedicated.

While this is called the semi-centennial anniversary of the church, yet in reality its history extends back more than fifty years. With the emigration of settlers to Iowa, so many of the good faithful Lutherans, Germans from the fast-growing border, the sea, and German and English Lutherans from the east. Here the congregation began, for the reconstruction of their parochial school together, the property adjoining the church on the east, purchased in the spring of 1895. Their bell, which is noted for the clearness of its tone, and organ, both the latter are costly, which ever since then has been an asset, practically indispensable to its further development and growth.

Period of Growth and Expansion.

From May 1870 the congregation set out upon a new era of greater development. Missions were started in South Liberty, West Branch, Helen Sharon Center, and later on, now Lone Tree—in Cedar Rapids—Decorah

ROOSEVELT WILL

10

WILL ARRIVE ABOUT 3 NOON

THREE S

West Liberty go with the Speech by Des Moines

Therefore Iowa City for 8 o'clock on November 4, here arrives he will address convention of

The speaker ranged through Hon. Charles Pillsbury, our congressman from Iowa and I know of it of November 4, to participate in the special nature of DR. E. E. BEED'S

THE WEATHER

Fair tonight and Sunday.

DR. E. E. BEED COMING

President of Lenox College To Attend Synod

Dr. E. E. Beed, one of the Presbyterian college presidents expected to be in attendance at the synodical meetings in this city next week, in presence of the venerable institution at Lenox, known as Lenox college. This college has a record which would be the happy possession of many more famous institutions, as to the men who have been connected with it. This state university, low rank on its faculty at least two conspicuous figures, Prof. W. H. McClure and Prof. Samuel Calvin, who both were at one time associated with Lenox college as student or instructor. Dr. Beed is an able executive and under his management Lenox College is advancing itself as the premier college of the northwestern

NEW BAR

CAPITALIST

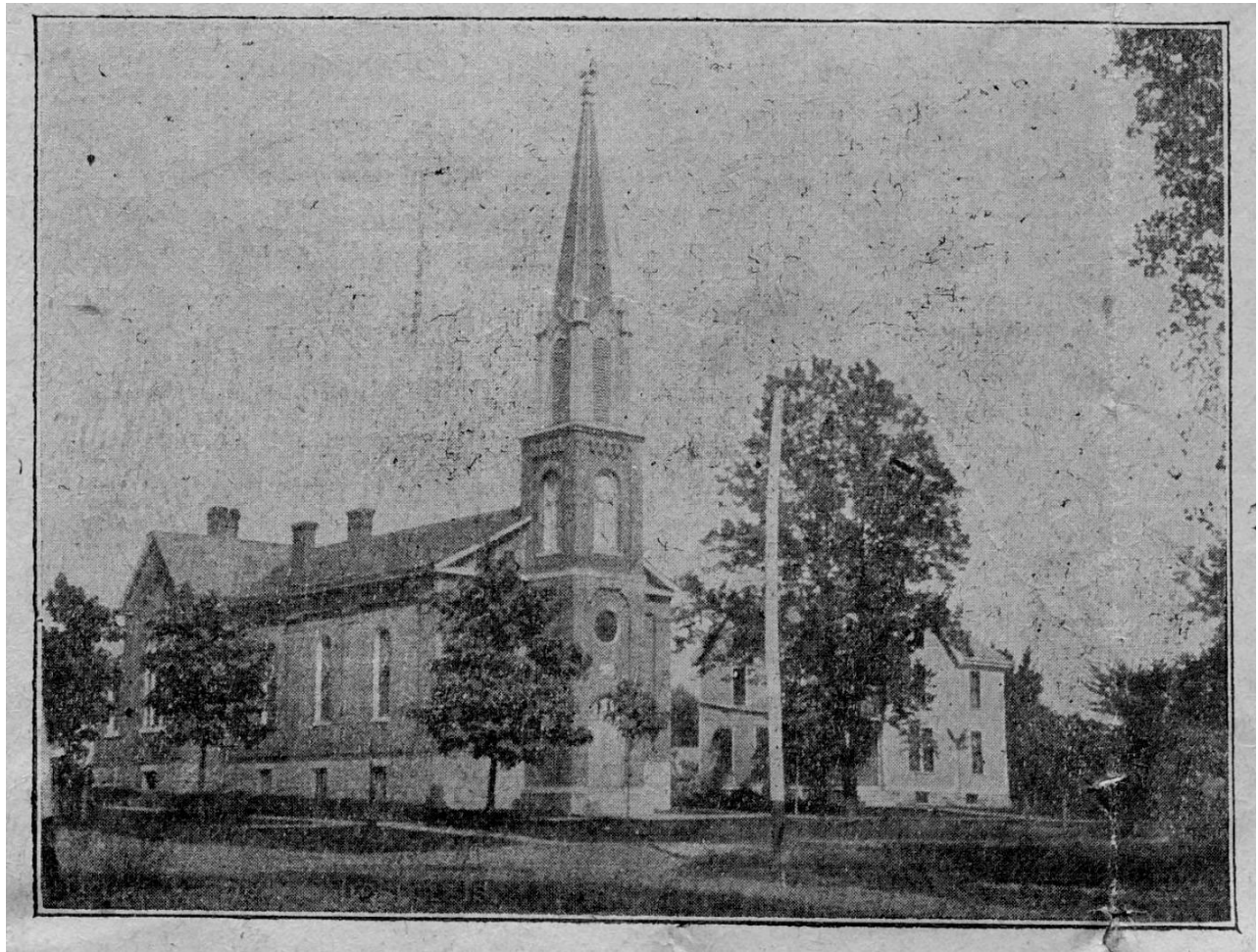
ING ON

TIONS

Assuming different pro Iowa City action, but what is yet to be done building is said to be

A picture of Pastor J.G. Hoerlein was featured under the heading "A Pastor Here for 23 Years".

A photo of Zion Lutheran Church (below) was also featured.



Herman Schroeder records further information about the Golden Jubilee:

On a beautiful Indian Summer day, October 16, 1910, Zion celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The church was tastefully decorated, and an abundance of flowers and autumn foliage were in evidence everywhere.

Many visitors from the congregations of Solon, Sharon Center, Atalissa, Wilton Junction, Waverly, Davenport, Cedar Rapids, Marengo, Norway, Atkins, Homestead, South Amana and Riverside came to help celebrate in a befitting way.

He notes that the Ladies Aid served lunch to about 300 of the visitors. Discussions with older members of Zion found that most recalled the dinner was “chicken with all the trimmings,” which was a Zion specialty.

An article summarizing the celebration was published in *Der Kirchenblatt*, 5 November 1910. A translation of the article and a copy of the original article written in German may be found in Appendix D.



Zion's Senior Choir with Pastor J.G. Hoerlein - 1910



Zion's Nave on October 16, 1910 – the 50th Anniversary Celebration



Ceiling of Zion's Nave on October 16, 1910

Figures compiled during J. G. Hoerlein's pastorate at Zion were impressive:

1. More members had been added to the membership in his tenure than during all its previous history.
2. He had performed some 600 baptisms.
3. He had confirmed over 300 individuals.
4. He had performed some 250 marriages.
5. He had conducted about 300 funerals.
6. He had increased the total number of communicants at Zion to about 450.

Additional biographical information on the Hoerlein family may be found in Appendix C.