

St. John Lutheran Church Celebrates 150 Years

St. John Lutheran Church of Waterloo will hold its second sesquicentennial celebration on Sunday, February 19. Children will tell the story of their Christian school during the past 150 years. The Rev. Joel Schwartz of Holiday, Florida, and the Rev. Jacob Schwartz of New Berlin, Wisconsin, will be the featured speakers at the 8:00 and 10:30 morning services. Both pastors grew up in Waterloo, sons of Armin and Linda Schwartz, and graduated from St. John Elementary School where their parents were teachers.



In 1874, Pastor Denninger began teaching the children in a rented room of the public school on Polk Street. Religion classes were taught in German and the secular subjects in English. The children were bilingual, speaking German to their parents at home and English to others in the community.



St John's teacher Miss Elsie Splittgerber in 1919 with lower grades in original 1878 school house on Jefferson Street

The German Lutheran congregation built a one room brick school house next to their church on Jefferson Street in 1878. That year they also built a home for the pastor on the corner of Jefferson and Pierce Streets. Both structures are still there.

The church and the school grew rapidly during the next ten years. When a larger cream brick church was built on East Madison Street in 1892, the original wood frame church on Jefferson Street became a second classroom. Pastor Pankow's daughter Angela took over the lower grades. A

second teacher, Mr. Henry Mitzner, was called to teach the upper grades in 1907.

An impressive two story four room school was built east of the church on Madison Street in 1922. That fall 58 students were enrolled, but the next year extra benches had to be brought in when 88 pupils showed up on opening day. All the classes, including religion, were now using the English language.

Principal Paul Kolander came as St. John's principal in 1936. He saw the school grow from two teachers to five. The addition of a gymnasium and meeting room in 1952 created much needed space, and Mr. K's basketball teams had a winning reputation.



St John Lutheran School 1922-1976. The 1917 parsonage on the left

Increased enrollment in 1961 required a major addition of four classrooms, cafeteria, offices, and a sixth teacher. The aging 1922 structure was replaced in 1976 with four more new classrooms.

Mr. Kolander retired in 1969 after 43 years as principal. He was followed by Frederick Janke, Arthur Hackbarth, Terrence Vasold, David Allerheiligen, Marcus Buch, and presently, Mark Eternick. More than two thousand students have received a Christ-centered education at St. John's school since that beginning in 1874, a blessing to both the church and the community. The congregation welcomes everyone to the celebration.