Chapter 13: The Churches

THE FIRST CHURCH IN PERRY
(The Old Hauge Log Church)

Before 1850, the pioneers of the historic Perry Norwegian Settlement could not join in liturgical worship and receive the sacraments. Their children were growing up without being baptized. The only public worship they could have was informal, lay-led Bible study sessions and prayer meetings based on personal experience. They held these gatherings in their small cabins or in the open.

In 1850, itinerant Norwegian preachers, or "circuit riders," began coming to the Blue Mounds Settlement (see Chapter 1). Although all three of the worship services these ministers conducted that year were north of what became the Perry Settlement, it is clear from baptismal and communion records that settlers from the Perry area took these opportunities to worship.

Then, on March 28, 1851, the Rev. Adolph C. Preus of Koshkonong officiated at the first formal Norwegian worship service in what became the Town of Perry. It was held at Anders and Aagot Sanderson's home (noted as 8 on the map of The Daleville School District).

The Perry settlers were united in their desire to build a place of public worship and willingly contributed logs and labor. Following plans made at a meeting sometime in 1851, they built a 20'X20' log church (9 in The Daleville School District) on the Sanderson property during the spring of 1852.

Rev. Preus held the first formal service there on May 21, 1852. The congregation organized on November 7, 1852, electing Anders Sanderson, Knute O. Grimsvedt of farm 26 in what became the Clay Hill School District, and Ole Jacobson Dalhby of farm 20 in what became the Daleville School District trustees.

Rev. Preus returned to hold one more service in the log church that year and three more in 1853. It is said the Rev. Elling Eielssen also held services there during these early years, but he kept no record of his pastoral journeys. Rev. Preus conducted the first confirmation service on May 27, 1853. The first wedding held in this church was that of Rev. P.A. Rasmussen to Ragnhild Holland in 1854. It should also be noted that during 1852 this building served as a schoolhouse.

During these very early years dissent grew among the members over the form their worship should take. Those who were committed to change before they left Norway, people already part of the Haugean Movement in Norway (see the initial narrative to Chapter 7), favored an informal, so-called "low-church" style. Such lay-lead worship was a necessity before having a Christiana University-educated, regularly-ordained-by-a-bishop-in-Norway minister available on a frequent and routine basis was a possibility. Some people with no previous inclination to this style of worship, people who conformed to the popular image of pioneers, undoubtedly became comfortable with this new way of worship and associated it with their new lives in a new place. They, too, favored a low-church style.

On the hand, people who had immigrated in order to pursue a traditional way of life no longer possible for them in an over-populated and industrializing Norway -- people for whom immigration was a conservative rather than a progressive act -- favored a formal, liturgical, "high-church" style. Rather than change and adapt themselves to new conditions in Norway, these people had come to a place where there was enough land for them to live the traditional Norwegian peasant way. They wanted to recreate, as closely as possible, the State Church of Norway in this new place. Some of the immigrants who were most homesick, for whom the sacraments and liturgical worship with its familiar words and forms offered virtually the only stability and security on the uncertain frontier, also favored this approach.
The parishioners on both sides held strongly to their separate views. At a meeting on November 5, 1854, the faction "loyal" to the State Church voted to form its own congregation. Pastor A.C. Preus, followed for a short time by Pastor Herman A. Preus of Spring Prairie, Wisconsin, served those who had now become the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Perry.

The settlers who remained with the church which had been organized in 1852 affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (also known as the Eielssen Synod, it became the Haugean Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1876.). As its first permanent pastor, Rev. P.A. Rasmussen served the Hauge Congregation along with a congregation in the Town of Vermont and, in 1855, organized and served the York Congregation (see below).

One can only imagine the discomfort of having these two factions using the same small church. It is recorded they at times locked one another out of the building. That may account for the 1856 installation of the State Church's first permanent pastor, Rev. Peter M. Brodahl, being held outdoors by the still smaller log school which had been built near what is now Daleyville (see Chapters 2 and 3).

The Haugeans used the log church until 1887, having also been served during those years by the Revs. Fjeld and Solberg. In 1861, Anders Sanderson had formally deeded the land that the church and its cemetery stood on to the Hauge Evangelical Lutheran Church for $2. During the pastorate of the Rev. Knudt Hageseth (1881-1906), the congregation built a new church (2 in the Forward School District) on Pastor Hageseth's farm east of Daleyville.

The Haugean congregation continued to use the log building for worship for 35 years -- 30 years is the typical life span of a log building. About then the ground timbers generally rot and the roofs begin to leak. From 1887 until 1927, this building was used for hay storage. This picture was taken shortly after the restoration in which the logs were covered with siding.

Members of the Hauge and Perry churches joined together in 1927 to restore the Old Hauge Log Church, and today it is open seven days a week for quiet meditation. In 1964, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin recognized the importance of this site with an official marker. In 1974, the church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

THE HAUGE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

As noted above, during the pastorate of the Rev. Knudt Hageseth, the members of the Hauge Congregation built a new church. Dedicated in 1887, it topped a hill 1 1/2 miles east of Daleyville and 1 1/2 miles west of Forward, on what is now County Trunk Highway A. Pastor Hageseth donated the site to the congregation.

The early 1900s were thriving years for the church, with about 20 families, that is, nearly 100 people, quite active. The congregation remained vigorous until the 1950s when, due to the decrease in rural population and membership, it became difficult to
continue. The members decided to join other churches in the area. The building was removed in 1981 and a stone marker, inscribed with a brief history of the church, put in place.

Pastors serving this church included K. K. Hageseth (1881-1906); J.A. Johnson (1908-1912); J.N. Dordal (1912-1916); E.E. Espelien (1917-1919); J.A. Haukom (1920-1934); M.J. Olson (1934-1945); and T.K. Kleven (1945-1954).

PERRY LUTHERAN CHURCH

After the November 5, 1854, decision by many members of the first church in Perry to form a separate congregation, which would follow the pattern of worship of the State Church of Norway, the new congregation had to organize. The men (until 1952 only the men of the congregation could vote on parish matters) elected three trustees: Ole Arneson Ruste, who the state church traditionally credits with being one of the leaders, along with Hans Johnson Dale and Knute O. Grimstvedt, behind the 1851-2 construction of the first church in Perry; Hans Johnson Dale, whose home was the closest cabin to the schoolhouse built in the fall of 1852, about a mile south of that first church (see Chapters 2 and 3); and Ole Kitesen Tvedten, whose home (17 in The Forward School District) was the closest to the even newer Torgerson School. O.B. Dahle (see Chapter 2) was, appropriately enough, elected auditor. Knute O. Grimstvedt served as "Kirkesanger" (religious leader of the congregation in the absence of a pastor) until 1856 when the congregation got its first pastor.

As sharing the log church with the other congregation became increasingly uncomfortable, the members of this new church had to address the question of where they would worship. At a February 19, 1855, meeting at the schoolhouse by Hans Johnson Dale's, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Perry decided to purchase the present church site (47 in The Village of Daleyville) from O.B. Dahle. The congregation made plans to erect a 46'x65' stone church, 18 feet high, on this site at a December 27, 1855, at Dahle's house.

But even before all this was decided, the congregation began the process of calling a Christiana University trained, ordained in Norway pastor. In the Church of Norway, individual churches did not have individual pastors. Rather, a pastor had charge of a parish composed of a head church and several annex churches. Therefore, it made sense to Norwegian immigrants for several neighboring congregations to join together to call a pastor. Which is exactly what the Perry, Springdale, Blue Mounds and Vermont congregations did.

In rural Norway pastors lived on "prestegards," government provided pastors' farm. Since the government obviously would not be providing such a farm here, the congregations would have to. On February 5, 1855, the trustees of the four congregations met and agreed to buy 42 acres in Blue Valley. Although not covered in this book as it is north of the Spring Valley School District, Blue Valley was close to the middle of the area from which the four cooperating congregations drew their members. By May 26, 1856, a 16'x24'x14' frame parsonage, a well and a stable were ready for use. A five acre field had also been "broken and fenced with a seven rail fence".

Pastor Peter Marius Brodahl and his wife, Johanne Caline Hoff, arrived in July 1856 and people came from far and near to witness his installation. This was fitting because Pastor Brodahl was not only going to minister to the four congregations which had called him, but also serve as a "circuit rider" to as many as 21 other congregations spread throughout southwestern Wisconsin.

Once Pastor Brodahl had arrived, he laid the official cornerstone of the new stone church which the Perry Congregation was building. Gunolf Jackson laid the foundation in 1856, while Wilhelm Larson served as the chief mason when the walls were erected the following year. The congregation began holding services in the new church long before it was completed, with the first recorded service being Christmas Day, 1858. Planks were laid on the joists and foundation walls to serve as seats. The dedication of the church was held in February of 1861.

Meanwhile, the Brodahls had moved into the Blue Valley parsonage in 1857. State church clergy who came to America from Norway in these years were a self-conscious, educated elite. Many felt and expressed a haughty disdain for the American "wilderness." It is said the Brodahls never became
acustomed to Blue Valley and, in 1861, moved to a rented house in Black Earth -- a reasonably large village on the railroad. This opened the door for the Perry Congregation to consider building a suitable parsonage near its impressive stone church -- the most impressive which Pastor Brodahl served.

Even the Christmas decorations were simpler in the first Perry Lutheran Church.

In September 1861, the congregation decided to buy the 60-acre Prindable farm adjacent to the church. Again, donations of money, labor, and materials were sought when the congregation voted to build a parsonage (54 in The Village of Daleyville) on that site in 1863. The Brodahs (who in January 1863 had provided a $100 loan to get the work started right away) moved in during the summer of 1863, as soon as construction was complete.

This made Perry the de facto head church for all the congregations its pastor served. In 1865, the Perry Congregation officially affiliated with the Church of Norway's American arm, the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America (usually referred to as the Norwegian Synod).

While serving Perry, Pastor Brodahl endured the hostility of parishioners who disagreed with his stance that the holding of slaves was not a sin and lost four of his children and, in March 1867, his wife to disease. Citing his own ill health, the 45-year-old Pastor Brodahl rendered his resignation and returned to Norway in June 1868, having served Perry for 12 years.

Before his departure, the congregation asked Pastor Brodahl to communicate with Rev. Abraham Jacobson, then in St. Louis where the Norwegian Synod educated its ministers, about accepting a call. Pastor Jacobson was installed in August 1868. He, too, came to serve Springdale and Blue Mounds and rode to places such as Adamsville in his ten years of ministry at Perry. Realizing that the distance many of people living in the northwest corner of the parish had to travel to get to church was too great, Rev. Jacobson and others preached quite regularly at the "Brigham" and "Pokerville" schoolhouses near present day Barneveld.

In March, 1878, the congregation regretfully accepted the resignation of Rev. Jacobson who wished to return to his boyhood home near Decorah, Iowa. (This farmstead is now part of the Vesterheim, the Norwegian-American Museum at Decorah.) Late in May, as the family was preparing to leave Perry, the area was struck by a tornado which was traveling from Mineral Point towards Madison. The parsonage and the church were heavily damaged, the pastor injured, and Charles Anderson, a man whom the pastor had befriended and allowed to stay at the parsonage at times, was killed. Four of the victims of this storm were buried at Perry the following day, while services for Miss Campbell, a schoolteacher killed as she was returning home, were held the following Sunday at Middlebury Methodist Church west of the Perry Parish, towards Adamsville.

Again subscription lists circulated to assure adequate funds to rebuild the church properties. The congregation decided to rebuild the church with only one change, the addition of a 132-foot wooden steeple.

While this reconstruction was going on, Pastor Adolph Bredesen was installed. Born in Norway but educated in the United States, Pastor Bredesen's campaign against "public dances and other vices" reflected the Haugen leanings of some
in the Norwegian Synod. His 1878-1881 tenure not only foreshadowed Perry's 1890 organizational and doctrinal union with these moderate low-church factions in the United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America (known as the United Synod), but also the 1883 reshaping of the Perry charge.

For more than half of his three years at Perry Pastor Bredeson had to hold services out of doors or in the various schoolhouses throughout the area served by that church, while officiating at worship in the Springdale, East Blue Mounds, West Blue Mounds, Vermont and Adamsville churches. The area was too large to be served by one man. Pastor Bredeson offered to stay and serve one newly organized, smaller parish. But, when no agreement could be reached on how to divide the charge, Pastor Bredeson tendered his resignation, preaching his farewell sermon in September 1881.

Rev. Peter Isberg arrived in 1882, a difficult time. Springdale and East Blue Mounds for the third time were appealing to withdraw from the charge. Agreement was reached in 1883 and a relationship of almost thirty years ended. Perry issued a second call to Pastor Isberg along with York (a Haugean-organized congregation) and Primrose. This was the beginning of a three point parish that would continue until 1958. During this 75 year era the Perry pastor also served the Adamsville (now Hollandale) and West Blue Mounds churches for various periods of time.

Even more acrimonious, however, were the heated debates of the "predestination controversy" -- the most abrasive conflict in the 19th century Lutheran Church. It began at Perry, as in the church-at-large, in the late 1870s and climaxed in the the 1880s. Some argued that God only predestined salvation, not damnation, holding that the damned reject grace and are responsible for their own damnation. Others contended that God predestined both. The Perry Congregation withdrew from the Norwegian Synod over the issue in July 1887. A little over three months later, in September, Rev. Isberg resigned.

Within less than a month, a letter of call was sent to an Augsburg Seminarian, Hendrick Voldal. (The Haugean Synod had created this school to educate its ministers.) Ordained in June, 1888, Rev. Voldal was installed as pastor of Perry the following month and in 1890 led all the congregations under his charge into the United Synod.

Meanwhile, in August 1888 lightening struck the wooden steeple of the Perry Church. When it was stuck again in August 1903, the congregation rebuilt the steeple in limestone and copper.

In 1893, probably not coincidentally the same year that Rev. Voldal married Sigri Femreit of Norway, the congregation built a new frame parsonage (55 in The Village of Daleyville). After 10 years residence there, Rev. Voldal resigned to go back to school in
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Norway.

Rev. Helge Hoverstad served the area for only five years, from 1905-1909, then resigned to accept a call to Sioux City, Iowa. He was said to have been a brilliant penman and organizer, and an exacting and dependable recorder.

In June, 1910, Rev. Joseph Green, Perry’s first American born pastor, was installed by his father, the Rev. L.E. Green, who had served as the interim pastor since the preceding Christmas. Joseph’s wife, Agnes (Estrem) died in 1913, leaving him with three small sons. The Greens are buried in the Perry Cemetery.

During Pastor Green’s tenure, the church underwent enlarging, remodelling, and refurbishing. This was done in preparation for the "Sixty Year Jubilee", a gala three day celebration held in June 1915. It must be stated here that as an adjunct to this festival, a gem of church history, "Sixty Years in Perry Congregation" was written and published by C.O. Ruste. Any serious researcher of Perry history would benefit from reading the record of pioneer life as detailed in this 143 page volume.

The stone being laid in this 1914 remodeling came from chief mason Erick Erickson’s farm, 27 in the Sandy Rock School District.

It was also during this time that the congregation began using the English language in worship services, at first replacing Norwegian for one service a month. It was not until the 1940s that services were conducted entirely in English, with Norwegian being reserved for special occasions or when requested.

In 1919, the congregation replaced the 1893 parsonage with a large brick home (55 in the Village of Daleyville), removed the horse sheds, and landscaped the cemetery. Kristine Goli, who served as the organist for Perry for sixty-nine years, organized a choir and the Lutheran League bought a pipe organ. The Sunday School was also organized in connection with the Parochial School.

Following Rev. Green’s resignation in 1921, Rev. John R. Lavik was called to Perry, but due to illness, only served until March of 1926. He was followed by Rev. J.H. Myrwang, another Norwegian born pastor, who came to serve Perry in 1926 and stayed until 1930. During this era the Perry Dorcas, organized in 1900 as the Perry Pigeforening by Pastor Voldal for confirmed young women who were not yet married, installed an electric light plant for the church and parsonage and an electric motor for the pipe organ.

Pastor Ingvald A. Lavik, his wife, Clara and their family arrived in Perry in January, 1932, and served until December, 1950, having the longest tenure of the pastors in Perry’s history. All was going well for Perry, despite the depression. The congregation was free of debt and it hoped to broaden its mission and focus on spiritual growth.

During a fierce thunderstorm on the night of July 11, 1935, this beautiful church burned to the ground, leaving only the stone walls. None of the furnishings were saved from destruction. Within a week the congregation met and plans for rebuilding the church were begun with few changes except enlarging the basement and adding an inside stairway. The building was completed in 1937 and a dedication service was held in November. The congregation had decided to postpone building a steeple, which was later done with a "low type" tower in 1954.
Pastor Lavik continued his leadership of Perry from the depression years, through World War II until late in 1950 when, due to failing health, he resigned to serve a smaller parish in Oconomowoc. Pastor and Mrs. Lavik are buried in the Perry Cemetery, Mrs. Lavik having returned to Daleville, as a widow, to make her home among old friends.

The size of the active congregation in Pastor Lavik’s years is reflected in this confirmation class in the early 1940s.

Pastor J.O. Jorgenson, his wife, Esther, and their six lively children, along with Esther’s mother, Mrs. Busness, were Perry’s next "parsonage family", being there from 1951-1958. During this time, preparations were underway for Perry’s Centennial, a two day festival which took place in June 1954.

Pastor Lavik also presided over Perry’s 90th anniversary celebration on August 6, 1944. It drew an amazing crowd considering war time rationing which effected gas available for civilian travel and the numbers away from the area in the service, two months after D-Day.

Following the pattern throughout the Synod, many meetings were held to consider dividing the three point parish. At the Annual Meeting in 1957, the Perry Congregation voted to become one parish,

Rev. H. Leonard and Dorthea Anderson and their family were the occupants of the big brick parsonage from 1964 until 1970, and proved to be the last of Perry’s pastors to live in that large home. In 1969, the congregation decided to sell the parsonage and thirty acres of the original property and to keep ten acres for future cemetery use. A new "ranch" style house was built adjacent to the church and completed in 1970. It was first occupied by Pastor Richard Halom and his wife, Diane, who had spent their first months in Perry in a rented farmhouse. Pastor Halom served Perry from 1970 until 1974. During his pastorate, a Junior Lutherans group was organized for the elementary students. Also, plans were begun for participation in the "Bethel Series" Bible Study, which had been developed by Rev. Harley Swiggum, a native of Perry.

Pastor Fred Hofer was installed at Perry in December, 1974, and with his wife, Nancy, and their two children, resided here until 1980. During this time the congregation, now part of the American Lutheran Church in America, celebrated its 125th anniversary, took part in the "Bethel Series" and began using the new green hymnbook, "The Lutheran Book of Worship," with its revised order of worship. As part of the anniversary celebration Milo Grundahl updated C.O. Ruste’s history of Perry.

Pastor Richard Rem, together with his wife, Darlene, served Perry from January, 1981 until May, 1989. A highlight for the Reams and for ten of Perry’s members, and in conjunction with the 130th anniversary, was an eight day tour of the Holy Land. To commemorate that unforgettable 1984 experience, the group brought Perry a gift from Bethlehem, a hand carved nativity set which has been used each Christmas. In 1988, with the merger of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, Perry became part of the new Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. In 1989, as part of the 135th anniversary celebration, Gladys and Milo Grundahl revised and updated his 130th anniversary history, producing "One Hundred Thirty-Five Years of Perry."

Pastor Thomas Marks is the present pastor of Perry Lutheran, arriving here in 1990 with his wife, Phyllis, and their two daughters. While here he has earned his Doctorate in Ministry and the congregation is celebrating its 140th anniversary.
The community from which York draws its members is located around the juncture of four counties: Dane, Iowa, Green, and Lafayette. Settlers began arriving in this area in the early 1850s. Some of the Norwegians among them assembled at the farm home of Torger Skartum (36 in The Meadow View School District) for worship. Worship was also conducted by laymen in the schoolhouse (34) which the pioneers built on this property. An 1850-1860 burial site (35) is also located on what was the Skartum farm.

In 1859, the Skartum home was also the site of the York Congregation’s first confirmation service. York Church had been organized in 1855 by twenty families under the leadership of Pastor P.A. Rasmussen, who was also served the Haugean Congregation nearly six miles north of here. With the arrival of Pastor John Fjeld at both of these churches in 1860, this congregation made initial for the erection of a church building. Although construction began as early as 1861, progress was delayed by the Civil War. The church was completed and dedicated in 1872.

With the calling of a pastor in 1880, there arose a disagreement which led to an eventual split in the congregation. The majority wanted to call a pastor from the Norwegian-Danish Conference, while the rest preferred the Norwegian Synod. The minority group organized into a new congregation and extended a call to Pastor Peter Isberg at Perry.

For some time both groups used the same building. In 1884, however, the group led by Pastor Isberg purchased the existing church and the other congregation erected a new building across the road. This is how "Old York" and "New York" came to be. The two York churches, together with Perry and Primrose, cooperated in conducting "Norske Skole" (parochial school, see below) in various schoolhouses during the summer, with teachers staying in the homes of students.

OLD YORK

Pastor Peter Isberg served "Old York" as part of a three point parish, including Perry and Primrose. Pastor J.R. Lavik, (1923-26), continued publishing a parish paper, The Parish Doings, as had his predecessor, the Rev. J.M. Green. This was a continuation of The Daleville Doings, a little newspaper published weekly by Teddy Grinder when he was a storekeeper in Daleville in the early 1900s. The Old York Congregation began a Sunday School at this time with Mrs. Ole Folkedahl as superintendent.

Long time organist, Mary Brager Johnson, remembers Pastor I.A. Lavik (1932-1950) working hard with the choir, Sunday School, and Ladies’ Aid. Several improvements were made to the church property at this time.

A Parish Hall was added and dedicated in 1953, during the pastorate of Rev. J.O. Jorgenson. The congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary with a two day festival in August 1955. This church's formal linkage with Perry and Primrose continued through 1957 when Perry became a one point parish. Primrose and York were then served by the Rev. Clifford Pederson until 1966. He was the last pastor of this congregation. The church closed in 1966 and its members joined neighboring congregations. The old church was razed in 1977. A monument to its existence and the cemetery are all that remain physically, but it is still alive in the hearts of those whose lives it touched.
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NEW YORK (YORK MEMORIAL)

The first major task facing this congregation was the construction of a new church. Building began in 1884, with construction completed by 1885. Pastor Ole Paulson, who took over leadership of the congregation that year, and stayed with them for twenty years, until 1905. His successor, Pastor O.H. Sletten, stayed until 1910 when Pastor H.J. Urdahl arrived for a ten year tenure. In 1921, under Pastor John A. Houkom, the congregation, along with Blanchardville Lutheran, built a parsonage in Blanchardville.

A program to rebuild the church began in 1948 with the exterior being covered with lannon stone and the addition of a new bell tower. The interior was completely refurbished.

In 1952 the name was officially changed from The York Evangelical Church to York Memorial Lutheran Church, paying tribute to the pioneers who organized the congregation.

BLANCHARDVILLE AREA MINISTRY

Beginning in 1979, the Blanchardville and York Churches shared the services of one pastor, as did Trinity and Hollandale Lutheran Churches. The two ministers worked together and had a joint church office in Blanchardville. In 1988, the four congregations united under one name, The Pecatonica Lutheran Parish, and called one senior pastor, Jeffrey Miller, for all four churches. He is assisted by a semi-retired pastor, Wayne Henderson, on a part-time basis, and by student interns from Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. The parish, as Perry, is now part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

HOLY REDEEMER CATHOLIC CHURCH

For the Kellers, Posts, Goebels, Schlimgings and Schmidt's, as well as other of the German Catholic settlers in the eastern part of the Town of Perry, it was difficult to attend church in the 1850s. These pioneers had to make their way on foot or by ox-team to the church in Cross Plains or the one in Pine Bluff. All that changed, however, in 1861 when these settlers had quarried and hauled stones and built a church.

In 1859, after one of them had to walk 26 miles to Madison for a priest to administer the last rites to the dying Caroline (Post) Keller and then the family had to transport her body back to Madison for burial, Spring Valley's Catholic settlers organized as San Salvador Church of the Holy Redeemer. By 1861, the 29 families of the congregation had raised enough money ($618) to build themselves a church.

With the church in place, parishioners gathered each Sunday to pray the Rosary and Litany followed by a reading of the Epistle and Gospels by one of the laymen. A priest came about once a month to say Mass and administer the sacraments. Until 1895, members took turns, alphabetically, escorting this priest to and from Cross Plains or Pine Bluff. That year the mission was transferred to the charge.
of the priest in Mt. Horeb.

In 1915, the congregation voted to build a new church. Parishioners began stockpiling the necessary supplies during the winter and completed construction of the red brick building in the fall of 1916. The congregation grew steadily in the 1940s and 50s, even as the farm population was declining. Over 350 people participated in the parish centennial in 1961.

Though much has changed in the years since then, with Mass now being said in English, girls becoming Mass servers, lay people assisting with the Eucharist, the removal of the communion rail, the priest facing the people during Mass, much still remains the same. As a member of the congregation, Mary M. Sutter, who was raised on Spring Valley farm 22, said

It was once written that this early pioneer church was a haven, a place of sanctuary, where the early immigrants could find and develop their best selves. The development of Holy Redeemer Catholic Church reflects the forefathers’ inner faith and spirit of sacrifice. The acknowledgement of their strength entices present members to look for personal faith development within the church’s walls.

Desire for human freedoms brought the first German Catholic immigrants to this country. The surrounding land and its resources reminded these people of their beloved homeland. The obligation felt to the settlement’s children prompted the newcomers’ search for moral and religious education near their new home.

Throughout its 135 year history, Holy Redeemer has remained a rural mission. The parishioner of today’s world, unlike his predecessors, is concerned not only with personal growth in the Spirit, but also in being a Christian example in the outside world. Holy Redeemer remains a gathering place, a sanctuary, enabling each parishioner to find and develop one’s best self.

PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

Both the Catholic and Lutheran pioneers were very concerned about the religious education of their children. Even before construction of the first schoolhouses, classes were held in the log homes. Children would attend from as great a distance as they were able to walk. To reduce the amount of time the children were away from home for school, and thus unable to help with the farm work, the schools "traveled," that is, moved from home to home every couple of weeks.

Such "traveling" schools, "omgangskole," were the norm in rural Norway from 1750 until 1860. The 1736 law establishing that every Norwegian had to be a confirmed member of the Lutheran Church meant that all Norwegian had to be taught to read (but not necessarily to write). The parish pastors established the system of rotating or ambulatory schools to save the cost of building permanent schoolhouses and the peasants supported it for the very same reasons that the pioneers did. It kept the children away from home the least, while adhering to the law that they must be educated.

Ole E. Ruste (not to be confused with his nephew Ole A. Ruste) was one of the Norwegian teachers
who brought this system to the Perry Settlement. He taught a "traveling" school in Springdale in 1850 and 1851. He also prepared the students who Rev. Preus confirmed in the first such service in the old log church in 1853 and then again in 1854.

After the public schools were built, the residents of the district's hired teachers for what were called English School. There the youngsters were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. However, the pioneers wanted their children trained in the faith of their fathers and in their mothers' tongue.

The Lutherans held four to six week terms of Norwegian School during the summer, while the Catholics' first (1865-1873) German language parochial school lasted most of the summer. Catechisms, hymns, and Bible passages were memorized and Bible stories learned in both denominations' parochial schools.

The Perry Congregation was first divided into four districts, under the tuteledge of Ole Jorgenson and Ole E. Ruste. The districts later corresponded in number and area to those of the public schools.

Gulbrand Jensvold is traditionally noted as one of the outstanding parochial school teachers, coming to Daleyville in 1866 and living there until his death in 1882. O.T. Savre was the parochial school teacher in the parish for the last 12 years of the 19th century. Both of these men worked closely with the pastors and served as the congregation's "klokker."

Just as in Norway, the klokker was, next to the pastor, the most important religious leader in the community. He gave the opening and closing prayer at each worship service, led the singing, rang the church bell, and read scripture during worship services, was part of the Baptismal Ceremony, and prepared young people for confirmation. In rural Norway klokkers lived on "klokker-gards," klokker's farms, which were often small places on larger farms. This tradition, unlike the parsonage farm tradition, did not continue in the historic Perry Norwegian Settlement. Perry's klokkers provided their own homes, some of which (such as Jensvold's rock home across from the church, 21 in Chapter 3) were nicer than the parsonages of the same period. Although the congregation paid them a small salary for their work, few of Perry's klokkers depended on this income for their principal livelihood. Many were as highly respected for their secular accomplishments in the community as they were for their role within the church. The Perry Congregation did not eliminate this position until 1928.

In the 1900s, the Norwegian School term was shortened to two weeks and, with so many parochial schools being taught at just about the same time, began to be taught by ordinary lay teachers, not just by the Klokkers. The English language also began to be used. Sunday School and weekly confirmation classes provided much of the religious instruction.

The rite of confirmation remained, as it had been in Norway, one of the most important events in a young person's life. Once each year, the pastor orally examined those 14 or 15 year olds who had completed their study of Luther's Catechism and the Bible in front of the entire congregation. Passing this examination meant, to the rest of the community and the confirmand, that the young person was well grounded in the principles of his moral and religious duties and was of good character and understanding. Following
confirmation young people became members of the church and were considered adults, ready to support themselves.


In the 1940s Perry helped build Lutheran Bible Camp near Elkhorn, Wisconsin. Attendance at the camp became a popular summer event for the older teenagers. After Sugar Creek Bible Camp near Ferryville, Wisconsin, opened its doors in 1969, some Perry youth began going there. In 1989, Sugar Creek counselors began coming to Perry to offer a week long Bible day camp to elementary school children. Bible School continues for a week each summer for the pre-school through kindergarten children.

The Catholic German parochial school has not been as constant a force in that community. The first, taught daily during summer vacation by lay catechist Michael Letz, lasted for eight years (1865-1873). At that time, eight to ten families left the Spring Valley parish and moved to South Dakota. While the school existed Mr. Letz taught Catechism, Bible history, the German language and reviewed reading, writing and arithmetic.

The German parochial school of religion resumed in 1892. It was held for four months each spring and supported by a $5 per year donation by every family in the parish, whether or not they had children in the program. The school, which had approximately 40 students each year, remained bilingual until World War I. It closed in 1937.

In 1939, Father Joachim Haesler began giving religious instruction to the youngsters of the parish one hour a week on Saturdays, throughout the year. Saturday morning catechism instruction for school age children began in 1953 in Mt. Horeb. A two-week Religion Vacation School during the early part of each summer supplemented these classes.

In 1964, Holy Redeemer started its own school of religion with about 70 children in the program. It peaked in about 1970 when it had nearly 100 students.

When attendance at the Holy Redeemer religion program peaked, the eighth grade class was held here in what was then Glenn and Carol Sutter's farmhouse (22, Chapter 4).

By 1980, however, enrollment had declined to less than 30 and was discontinued. The children again had to go to Mt. Horeb for religious instruction. However, in recent years Holy Redeemer has been able to resume Sunday School classes for the pre-K through 8th grade children at their church. Only the high school age confirmation students must go to Mt. Horeb for religious instruction.
The log church that housed the area's first Norwegian Lutheran church-goers still maintains a cemetery.