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DAUGHTERS OF SERBIN, 1870 - 1905
HISTORY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES
AT
FEDOR AND WARDA, TEXAS

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Historical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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June 1945

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DAUGHTERS OF SERBIN, 1870-1905
HISTORY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES
AT
FEDOR AND WARDA, TEXAS

In the year 1854 some 500 Wends¹ under the leadership of the Rev. Mr. Johann Kilian landed in Galveston, Texas, with the hope of finding religious freedom in the New World. For years these Wends had suffered political oppression which they had learned to endure. When however, in 1817 the Prussian government attempted to unite the Lutheran and Reformed churches, adding religious oppression to their other burdens, deep resentment was felt by these Lutherans. With the exception of a handful of courageous souls who migrated to the United States and Australia, the Wends did nothing to free themselves from this condition, chiefly because they lacked leadership. By 1854 a sufficiently large number rallied around Pastor Kilian of Weigersdorf, Prussia, to leave for Texas where they hoped to enjoy church life free from government

¹The Wends, popularly so called, are also referred to as Slavo-Lusatians or Serbo-Lusatians. They are one of the many Slavic minorities still existing in Germany and trace their history back beyond the Christian era. For the most part they lived in the present region of Brandenburg, and Silesia (Prussia), and in Saxony, north and south along the Spree River. Cf. George C. Engerrand, The So-Called Wends of Germany. p. 13.

restraint.² Arriving at Galveston, Texas, they made their way over the Houston Prairie toward Lee County where the majority settled at a place later called Serbin.³

The history of St. Paul's congregation, as it was later called, with its doctrinal, racial, and language disputes, has already been told. But the story of its first daughters, the congregations which were organized at Fedor and Warda, Texas, is equally important for it shows how the parent and branch congregations influenced one another and how they in turn became one of the strong nuclei around which the present Texas District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States was formed.

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Fedor, Texas, 1870 - 1905

During the late 60's of the past century a number of Wends and Germans settled about twenty miles north of Serbin along the Yegua creeks, particularly near the West

²For a fuller account of this migration, their leader the Rev. Mr. Johann Kilian, and the history of the mother congregation at Serbin, Texas, cf. Arthur C. Repp, "St. Paul's and St. Peter's Lutheran Churches, Serbin, Texas, 1855-1905" in Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XV (July, 1942), pp. 35-46; XV (January, 1943), pp. 115-123; XVI (April, 1943), pp. 18-28; XVI (July, 1943), pp. 49-57; XVII (April, 1944), pp. 15-29;

³Serbin, Texas, no longer has a post office address. It is six miles west of Giddings, the county seat. Giddings is on the Austin-Houston highway.

Yegua. At first these settlers, especially the Wends, travelled the long distance to Serbin for their spiritual needs. As the number increased it became evident that a separate congregation with its own pastor and school would be more practical. Gradually the sentiment became strong enough to make an attempt to obtain a minister who might teach and preach to the settlements scattered in the vicinity. When the Rev. Mr. Theodore Brohm, representing the officials of the Synod, came to Texas to settle the dispute in the Serbin congregation which was at white heat at the time, an invitation was extended to him to visit the settlement.⁴ Consequently Brohm and Ernst Leubner, the parochial school teacher at Serbin, made the trip on horseback, and on March 11, 1870, an organization meeting was held deciding that a church should be built on the "Long Prairie" tentatively to be called "Trinity".⁵ If Kilian at Serbin had any misgivings regarding this move, he probably did not express them because of other matters which disturbed him within his own congregation at the time. Later he did strenuously object to this organization because it encroached into the Serbin parish.⁶ A few

Draft of letter by Kilian to Walker, March 7, 1871.

⁴Repp, op. Cit., XVI, number 1, p. 22 f.

⁵Minutes of the congregational meeting of Trinity Church, referred to hereafter as Trinity Minutes.

⁶Minutes of St. Paul's, Serbin, Feb. 25, 1875.

months after the organization of Trinity when the question of a resident pastor was discussed, Kilian again objected on the grounds that the group was too small and the members could readily send their children to his school in Serbin.⁷

In spite of Kilian's objections, the little band of Lutherans again met on January 6, 1871, and resolved to build a house which could be used as a church and school at first. Later it might serve as a parsonage when a separate church and school would be erected. The building was to measure about 26 x 20 feet and the cost for the material was estimated at eighty dollars. To complete the undertaking six school benches were to be built. In the same meeting the official name was adopted, "Holy Trinity Church on the West Yegua, Burleson County, Texas".⁸

At this time there was a graduate of the "practical" seminary in St. Louis, named J. A. Proft, living with his married sister in this territory.⁹ He was well liked by Kilian because he did not think young Proft too forward and ready to reform everything, an experience with which

_____ Having given this station a try, it was resolved to

⁷Draft of letter by Kilian to Walther, March 7, 1871. Serbin archives.

⁸Trinity Minutes. This section was a part of Burleson County but later became a part of the newly formed Lee County.

⁹Birkmann, Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt, Oct. 5, 1839. Hereafter referred to as G.D.V.

¹⁰Birkmann, G.D.V., Nov. 13, 1839.

Kilian by this time had had enough.¹⁰ Proft had been trained in Bautzen, Saxony, as a cabinet-maker and later had decided to become a missionary. For this purpose he studied at Hermannsburg, Hannover, going from there to St. Louis where he had completed his studies.¹¹ Being of Wend extraction he made a suitable candidate for the mission-station on the West Yegua. He was asked to teach in the school while Pastor Palmer, who had been installed at St. Peter's in Serbin during December 1870, was asked to preach occasionally.

A site of about fifty acres for the new church was donated by a Mr. Boback who owned about a league of land on the West Yegua, parcelling it out to the settlers as they moved in. Proft found his early training as cabinet-maker quite handy for he now drew the plans for the house and gave much assistance in building. Before this he had designed the windows for St. Paul's at Serbin and later was called to assist St. Peter's. His talents were again made use of when the first Warda pulpit and altar were built.¹²

Having given this station a try, it was resolved to call Proft as resident pastor, whereupon he was installed to a number of so-called unofficial meetings for which no minutes were kept. This practice was kept up till

¹⁰ Draft of letter by Kilian to Walther, March 7, 1871. Serbin archives.

¹¹ Birkmann, G.D.V., Oct. 5, 1939.

¹² Birkmann, G.D.V., Nov. 13, 1930.

by Pastor Pallmer on September 3, 1871. Kilian had been asked to officiate but being ill at the time, he instructed Pallmer to install the candidate.¹³ At the first regular meeting following the installation it was resolved to have Wendish services four times a year with Holy Communion. School was to begin on October 1, and to be taught four days a week, as was customary when the school was conducted by the pastor. The tuition was assessed at eight dollars per child per year.¹⁴

One of the chief difficulties of the time was the matter of drinking water. The water had to be carried in barrels three times a week and Proft was there two years before the first cistern was built. As a result there was much fever in the neighborhood, Proft himself being frequently sick. Later his wife died at the birth of their first child, a still-born, and Proft buried both in one grave about three miles away, where he later built himself a home.¹⁶

¹³Draft of letter by Kilian to Buenger, Sept. 11, 1871. Serbin archives.

¹⁴Minutes, Sept. 24, 1871. This is the third official meeting of the congregation. References are made at this time to a number of so-called unofficial meetings for which no minutes were kept. This practice was kept up till Birkmann came. Hence much important information is lost.

¹⁵Birkmann, Texas Distriktsbote, vol. 8, number 2, May 1923.

¹⁶Birkmann, G.D.V., Oct. 5, 1939.

It soon became evident that the small building was not large enough for both school and parsonage. The parochial report for 1872 shows that there were about thirty-one children in the school, including two children of non-members.¹⁷ So in January 1872 it was resolved to remodel the building, for which three hundred dollars had already been subscribed.¹⁸ Incidentally an item in the building expense account gives us an interesting sidelight of the time. In addition to the stipulated amount for building called for by the contract, the congregation also had to supply the head builder with whiskey as the records still show.¹⁹ It has been said that this particular contractor always required this special item before he could build well.

Though Proft was good in doctrinal matters and was quite practical in building operations, he lacked the necessary executive ability. As a result he soon found himself in the midst of many troubles with his congregation, often for good cause.²⁰

¹⁷Synodical Report, Western district, 1873.

¹⁸Minutes.

¹⁹Itemized account found after the minutes of Jan. 7, 1872 meeting.

²⁰Birkmann, G.D.V., Oct. 22, 1924.

When he accepted the call to this congregation no definite salary was set, due probably to the uncertain future of the charge. After a few months Proft asked that a definite salary be promised him, a demand which was certainly not unreasonable. One of the members proposed that \$ 400.00 be paid per year. However this was protested by a few and nothing was done.²¹ Not until another year was a salary voted and that for \$ 400.00 plus feed for the horse. At the same time it was stipulated that Wendish services were to be held twelve times per year, four times with Holy Communion.²² During this time leaders of the faction in Fayette County in the process of organizing a congregation near Warda planned to call Proft. The latter was willing enough to leave under the circumstances but accepting a call to this congregation would have involved him in still some other trouble and so nothing came of it.²³

An opportunity to relieve the financial pressure on the treasury of the congregation was afforded when it was found out that money was available from public school funds. In a special meeting the matter was brought up and for a two month period aid was accepted in order that the

Minutes, Feb. 25, 1872.

²¹ Minutes, Jan. 7, 1872.

²² Minutes, Feb. 16, 1873. This subject will be found on

²³ Draft of letter by Kilian to Buenger, Oct. 27, 1872. Serbin archives. See *infra*, p. 108 and Repp, *op.cit.* XVI (July, 1943), p. 52.

congregation could obtain the necessary books for the school. In asking for this help it was understood that this aid was temporary, so that the independence of the school would not be lost.²⁴ How long this was done the records do not show but toward the end of the next year the matter of state funds was again brought up and one of the members was asked to go to the capital at Austin if necessary to obtain a grant.²⁵ Thus we see that in this congregation too, as well as St. Paul's and later in Warda, the vexing matter of state aid for the school was brought up.²⁶

During 1873 Proft built a house for himself some three miles to the east of the school near the burial place of his wife and child. The pastor claimed that he changed his residence for reasons of health, but the congregation was not satisfied. The people felt that he should remain near to his school and church and this together with other difficulties soon brought about a serious situation. In addition to this there were others living in the vicinity of Proft's new home who wanted to break away and begin a

²⁴Minutes, Feb. 25, 1872.

²⁵Minutes, Sept. 7, 1873.

²⁶A fuller discussion of this subject will be found on p. 52 ff.

new congregation. This trouble prompted an official visitation in January 1874 ²⁷ by Pastor M. Tirmenstein of New Orleans, Louisiana, and for a time there was an end to the matter, though no doubt an undercurrent was still there.

Up to this time the congregation worshipped in the school building. Originally the intention was to build a church as soon as possible after the school was completed, but this plan was postponed. Since the school became too small, it was resolved in October 1874 to build a separate church. Subscriptions were taken and the plans were finished and accepted by January 31, 1875. It was to be 40 x 25 feet and 16 feet high with a tower of about 48 feet. ²⁸ The contract was let three weeks later for \$ 385.00. ²⁹ To round out the property for the church site another acre of land was bought for five dollars. ³⁰

The sickness which had already bothered Proft seemed to recur very often now. Thus when Tirmenstein came again in 1875 on an official visit, Proft was excused from teaching school for the time being. ³¹

²⁷ Minutes, Jan. 11, 1874.

²⁸ Minutes. The minutes of the meeting in which Proft's resignation was not on hand. He probably resigned

²⁹ Minutes, Feb. 21, 1875.

³⁰ Minutes, March 23, 1875.

³¹ Minutes, May 4, 1875.

What was supposed to have been a temporary arrangement proved more or less permanent and complaints were made that the children were not receiving proper schooling.³² Some members demanded the pastor's resignation if he could not take care of his duties, but when Proft offered his resignation in the meeting of September 1875, others at first objected. Finally however it was accepted.³³

One of the reasons why a few probably objected to the resignation of Proft was because of the language difficulties between the Wends and the Germans. The Wendish group, which was decidedly in the minority in this congregation, felt that the next pastor in all probability would not be able to handle their language and they would thus be at a disadvantage. When the matter of calling a new man was discussed the language question was naturally an important matter. Finally a compromise was accepted on December 2, 1875, after a number of meetings had been called. It was decided that if a Wendish pastor could be obtained the minority group would remain. If a

³²Minutes, July 11, 1875.

³³Minutes; The minutes of the meeting in which Proft resigned are not on hand. He probably resigned Sept. 19, 1875.

German pastor was called they would be permitted to leave to organize a church of their own.³⁴ Probably because the Wendish faction realized that only a German pastor was available the minority did not wait till the new man was called. Instead they remained loyal to Proft and called him as their pastor, organizing the Eben Ezer congregation on the San Antonio prairie where Proft now lived. The majority, consisting chiefly of Germans, set about calling a pastor. The one person who did not sympathize with this group was Kilian, who as senior pastor, regarded himself as the overseer. Proft was his friend and since Pastors Greif of St. Peter's and Stiemke of Warda had been responsible for settling the matter as it now stood, Kilian decided to make his objections known. He therefore took it upon himself to write Pres. Walther, head of the Synod, suggesting that no pastor be given the "stubborn" majority because, as he felt, a teacher for the school was sufficient. He did not believe that Synod would want two young men in this field, especially since one man could take care of the entire group. Kilian felt that it was a waste of precious man-power for five men to be stationed in this vicinity.³⁵ The whole situation

³⁴ Minutes.

³⁵ Draft of letter by Kilian, April 12, 1876. Serbin archives.

was merely a dissension [dichostasia] as far as he was
concerned.³⁶

In the meanwhile the majority group dedicated its church
on the Sunday of Invocavit 1876, being served by Pastors
Greif and Stiemke who served during the vacancy. While the
congregation tried in vain to get a pastor, a Mr. Christoph
Wagner of Serbin took care of the school.³⁷ For this work
he was to receive 75 cents per child per month.³⁸

After a vacancy of a year a candidate for the ministry
was procured in the person of Gotthilf Birkmann, who was to
have this parish for many years. Birkmann, a graduate of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was an Illinois man, born at
Waterloo. Accustomed to country life in a fairly progress-
ive area he was to find life in Texas some twenty years
behind his home state. Because of the extreme heat at the
time, he was advised not to come until early fall.³⁹ On
his arrival he was taken to St. Peter's Church at Serbin
under the care of Pastor Geyer who ordained and installed
him. This solemn event took place on October 1, 1876.⁴⁰

³⁶ Draft of letter by Kilian to Biltz, March 14, 1876. Serbin archives.

³⁷ Birkmann, G.D.V., Nov. 13, 1930.

³⁸ Minutes, Feb. 26, 1876.

³⁹ Report of Rev. Geyer in meeting of July 30, 1876.

⁴⁰ Birkmann, Giddings News, Oct. 6, 1933. Synodical Report, Western District, 1877.

It was a very busy entry into the ministry for on the very day of his ordination Birkmann received the news that a parishoner had died and was to be buried the following day. Thus Birkmann had the unique experience of preaching a funeral sermon before he preached his initial sermon.⁴¹

The young minister was expected to teach school almost immediately. He had very little experience for this task. He had been temporarily employed as a student-teacher in the home congregation in Illinois but hardly enough to make him feel competent for the task. However as many another man under similar conditions was forced to do, he based his methods on Lindemann's "Schulpraxis", at that time the standard in Synod for the secular branches, and added to this his good common sense.⁴² The school had deteriorated during Proft's time due to the continued irregularity. Only fifteen pupils attended school toward the end of 1874. In all there were some fourteen above the age of eight in the parish who attended either no school at all or were getting a smattering of education elsewhere.⁴³ Conditions improved during the time when Mr. Wagner taught. There were about twenty-five when Birkmann began. Given an opportunity, the

⁴¹Birkmann, Giddings News, Oct. 6, 1933.

⁴²Interview with Dr. G. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas.

⁴³Minutes, Jan. 3, 1875.

people were anxious enough to send their children as is evidenced by the continued support even though the school was under serious handicaps the next year due to frequent changes in teachers.

Birkmann found the conditions at Trinity typical of the rural schools in Texas, including those conducted by the state. It seems that the original schoolhouse had been converted into a parsonage and the church was used as a school. The first few pews served as benches. A collapsible desk was attached to the backs of the pews for the benefit of the young learners. Naturally the little ones found the adult sized pews quite awkward. Birkmann tells of one little youngster who was so short that he had to use the seat as his desk and kneel on the floor with his back toward the teacher while he was doing his written work on a slate.⁴⁴ When the "northers" came in fall and winter, this building was very cold. With no ceilings nor ceiled walls the small box stove could hardly throw sufficient heat and it was "barbarisch kalt". As additional equipment a little three by three footboard served for a blackboard, and only a few books were on hand to go around. The people in general were very poor and thus neither the children nor the school could be provided any

⁴⁴ This boy was later the Rev. E. F. Moerbe, now emeritus pastor at Aleman, Texas.

too well. Since the Wendish language had just about died out by this time, especially with the minority group of Wends leaving, German became the chief language. All school subjects were taught in German during the morning hours, while English was a poor second the rest of the day. Among the subjects taught, religion and reading were considered the most important. The first hour of the day was given over to religion. Reading was practiced frequently the rest of the day, with arithmetic a natural second. The study of history was virtually unknown, and geography was merely touched upon ["wurde getrieben"]. However the children sang often. Teacher Leubner of Serbin told Birkmann to have them sing whenever they became tired and it seems that he used the suggestion frequently. Church hymns and a few German folk songs were the usual repertoire. Since school inspection, either by the state or by the church was unknown, everyone did as well as he could or cared to do under the circumstances. There were frequent interruptions in the school calendar, for the pastor was often called to the sick bed. That meant the end of school for the day. In addition to these interruptions, many church holidays were strictly observed by special services which meant additional school days dropped. Besides the week of Christmas vacation and two weeks after Easter, there were two holidays after Pentecost, three "Mary-days", Michaelmas, and the day of

John the Baptist. When the crops, especially cotton, required extra hands, school was also called off. A systematic school calendar was unknown in this part of the country.⁴⁵ had to be solved. For all these responsibilities

Before Birkmann's marriage, one of his sisters kept house for him. When she married, another sister came to take her place. These sisters acted as a conscience upon the tired young minister. Speaking of the recess periods, especially at noon, Birkmann says, there was often much noise [Toben] when the children ran wild. He liked to take his time over the noon-meal ["Ich nam mir Zeit"]. Frequently his sister had to remind him that it was time for school. "It's not so alarming" ["Ist nicht so aengstlich"], would be his reply, but between his conscience and his sister he soon got to school.⁴⁶ even under the church

It can be well understood that the school sapped the energy of Birkmann from the many other duties in the parish. After dismissal of school at four o'clock, confirmation instructions began. The first year of Birkmann's pastorate there were ten children for this class. Another important task for the minister was to look up the many new German families moving into the territory. The Americans

⁴⁵Interview with Dr. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas.

⁴⁵Interview with Dr. G. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas.

⁴⁶Ibid.

were leaving the community and the Germans were taking their places. While this gave the parish a bright future, it required much attention. The internal difficulties of the congregation had to be solved. For all these responsibilities together with the four days spent in school, teaching made the pastor's task quite heavy. Small wonder that the community became accustomed to pointing out the parsonage as the house where the lamp was burning late into the night.

Since Birkmann was a great lover of nature, he found this interesting country. At first there were no roads through the woods and his visits to his members, though arduous, were adventures to him. The peat bogs near Fedor became his camping ground in periods of relaxation. Wild animals were not uncommon and since there was no fence around the church, they often found a haven under the church and the parsonage.⁴⁷ In the years of his long pastorate at Fedor, Birkmann gathered many collections, especially butterflies. One of these was exhibited at the World's Fair at St. Louis and later was purchased by St. Paul's College of Concordia, Missouri.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Birkmann, G.D.V., April 28, 1932.

⁴⁸Interview with Dr. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas.

One of the important events for the children as well as for the teaching-pastor was the annual Christmas celebration. Many weeks of practice went into the program for this celebration, although the same one was used every year. None of the children missed school for every one enjoyed the hour of practice every day even though it meant learning many Bible passages from the Old Testament prophecies, as well as the usual Christmas hymns.

The congregation joined in the spirit of the Christmas celebration by contributing twenty-five cents per person, a fair sum for those days. From this money the gifts for the children were purchased. The children received candy, nuts, not pecans for they were too common, but "niggertoes", hazel nuts, and almonds, as well as apples and oranges. In order that something lasting might be found among the gifts, a religious book or picture was included. While there were usually no evening services in the rural parishes, Christmas and New Year's Eve were exceptions. A half dozen kerosene lamps brought by the farmers augmented the "Kronenleuchter" and the festive candles to give the congregation sufficient light. Crowds were attracted for some five miles around even though there were no heating accommodations in case of a "norther". When the happy hour for the service came, the young pastor forgot his troubles in the spirited singing of the children. The evening's program included a question for each child and a short talk by the pastor. Later these talks were dropped

for as Leubner had told Birkmann, he might just as well spare himself the trouble for this event and let the children be the preachers.⁴⁹

The Christmas tree furnished by the congregation was usually procured from the cedar woods near Warda where there were some particularly tall trees. Birkmann tells the story when on one occasion there almost was no tree, which might have been a major tragedy for the children. It so happened that the Presbyterian Church in Giddings also ordered its tree from Warda. One of the members of the Fedor congregation had brought his tree in from Warda and had stopped in town. While he was gone one of the Presbyterian members seeing the tree on the wagon thought it was for his church; consequently he took it. When the Fedor farmer came back his tree was gone, and sadly he had to return home without the coveted tree. There he gave the strange explanation, "I had a tree but they stole it from me." Hurriedly a smaller one was gotten near Fedor. Weeks later one of the deacons of the Presbyterian Church apologetically told Birkmann what had happened.⁵⁰

Besides taking care of his own parish, Birkmann answered a request from a number of Danish Lutherans living in nearby

⁴⁹Birkmann, G.D.V. Dec. 19, 1935.

⁵⁰Interview with Dr. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas.

Lexington to preach to them occasionally. The Fedor congregation readily granted permission for their pastor to make this trip on Sunday afternoons.⁵¹ There was no Lutheran church at Lexington but services were held at times in the Baptist church and sometimes in a school house.⁵² This added to the work but was gladly accepted by Birkmann because of the increased opportunities to preach.

Over on the San Antonio prairie the newly organized Eben Ezer congregation of Proft still had its difficulties. Proft had already left for Sherman, Texas, and the Rev. Kaspar was his successor. One of the chief troubles of Eben Ezer was that they had not received a written release from the Fedor congregation. When the synodical visitor, the Rev. Koesterling of Missouri, came in 1878 the matter was called to his attention. After an investigation he was able to settle the dispute to the satisfaction of both congregations. At the same meeting in which this breach was healed, Koesterling announced that Kilian had admitted his heresy and had recanted.⁵³ This was a relief to many for it hurt these good people to see their former leader going astray.

⁵¹Minutes, Oct. 14, 1877.

⁵²Birkmann, G.D.V., Nov. 13, 1930

⁵³Minutes, Jan. 17, 1878. Kilian had taught a form of chiliasm contending that Judgment Day was not to come before a general conversion of all heathen. For a full account see Repp, op. cit. XVII, (April, 1944) p. 15 f.

During July 1879 Birkmann received a call to serve the mission station at Dallas and vicinity. The people of Fedor were loath to have their pastor go and asked him to decline the call.⁵⁴ Young Birkmann turned to Koesterling for advice and on the basis of it again asked the congregation for a release which was reluctantly given.⁵⁵ Thus ended Birkmann's first pastorate at Fedor.

The congregation lost no time in getting a new pastor. A week after releasing Birkmann they called the Rev. J. M. Maisch of Harris County.⁵⁶ This call was at first declined. When it was sent the second time Maisch accepted it and was installed on the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.⁵⁷

The Pastor Maisch had had much experience in the ministry. He had been the first German Lutheran pastor in Kansas City, Missouri. In 1874 he had been called to Klein, Texas, and later to Cypress. He was an energetic preacher who could carry his audience along with his zeal. During his pastorate at Fedor he preached in Lexington and McDade as well as at Corn Hill (Walburg) in Williamson County. Considering the

Rejoicing his health, he accepted a call to

⁵⁴Minutes, July 29, 1879.

⁵⁵Minutes, Aug. 17, 1879. "J. M. Birkmann...", Oct. 20, 1881.

⁵⁶Minutes, Aug. 24, 1879.

⁵⁷Minutes, Nov. 12, 1879. Der Lutheraner, XXXVI (Jan. 15, 1880) says it was the twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

difficulty of travelling at the time, this was quite a missionary program. Unfortunately Maisch could not do lasting work in a community.⁵⁸

The same energetic trait which made Maisch an aggressive missionary seems to have made him a strict disciplinarian in school. Consequently he was feared by the children more than he was loved. This was quite a contrast to his more easy-going predecessor. Maisch felt that his teaching duties hindered his mission interests so that it wasn't long before he suggested that the time had come for the congregation to call a full-time teacher. This was done in August 1880.⁵⁹ After two attempts the congregation successfully called Henry Nehrling,⁶⁰ who had been born in Wisconsin and studied at the teachers' college in Addison, Illinois. Under Professor Duemling he had become intensely interested in nature study. Nehrling served as teacher in Chicago for a few years, but because of his health came West to his former schoolmate Gerhard Kilian, now at Serbin, Texas. Here his interest in nature was increased by the variety of flora and fauna all around him. Regaining his health, he accepted a call to

⁵⁸"Ein Brief des alten Past. G. Birkmann...", Oct. 22, 1924. Austin archives.

⁵⁹Minutes, Aug. 29, 1880.

⁶⁰Minutes, Jan. 30, 1881.

Houston, where he was the first teacher of the present Trinity School. From Houston he came to Fedor in 1881. The open country, the peat bogs, the streams and woods were just what a man of his interests found ideal. The bird life held a particular interest for him.⁶¹

After a pastorate of three years, Maisch received a call to Williamson County from one of the mission stations which he had organized. The congregation granted him a release, and so was again without a pastor.⁶³ A few weeks later Nehrling received a call from Pierce City, Missouri. Though he had been in Fedor only a little over a year, he wanted to make a change because of his health. Action was postponed because the congregation was quite concerned about getting another pastor.⁶⁴ However when they decided to call Birkmann back from Dallas, a release was granted to Nehrling.⁶⁵

⁶¹Birkmann, G.D.V., Feb. 26, 1931. For a more complete sketch of Nehrling see C. W. G. Eifrig, "Henry Nehrling" in the Lutheran School Journal, LXVI (Jan., 1931).

⁶²Birkmann-Michalk, Geschichte der Dreieinigkeits-Gemeinde zu Fedor, ms. in Fedor archives.

⁶³Minutes, July 2, 1882.

⁶⁴Minutes, July 30, 1882.

⁶⁵Minutes, Aug. 6, 1882. Nehrling's teaching career was short. He took up his interest in nature as livelihood. In time he became internationally famous. His great work was "Nord-amerikanische Vogelwelt". Much of his information for this study had been gained in Texas. (Birkmann, G.D.V., Feb. 26, 1931).

Birkmann was installed by Pastor Buchschacher on the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity 1882,⁶⁶ and so began his second pastorate at Fedor. During his absence influx of new settlers had increased greatly. In 1881 Maisch had reported some 354 souls for the parish, an increase of 119 in two years.⁶⁷ This continued during the decade as Germans came in from Saxony and from nearby Serbin.⁶⁸

Now that teacher Nehrling had been called away, it was necessary for Birkmann to teach again till the vacancy could be filled. Finally early in 1883 the congregation procured G. M. Schleier. He had been a teacher in Memphis, Tennessee, but when yellow fever raged so terribly in that city the congregation was completely decimated leaving them without a school. Schleier moved to Sherman, Texas, where he lived with his parents until he was called to Fedor.⁶⁹ Because the parsonage was being renovated, Birkmann was living in the teacher's house when Schleier arrived. Consequently the latter, who was still a bachelor, boarded with the pastor. By Christmas of that year it was possible for the pastor to

⁶⁶ Der Lutheraner, XXXVIII (Dec. 1, 1882).

⁶⁷ Synodical Report, Southern District, 1882.

⁶⁸ Birkmann, G.D.V., Sept. 27, 1934.

⁶⁹ Birkmann, "Lehrer an unsern Gemeindeschulen in Texas" in Texas Distriktsbote, XV (April, 1930).

move into the parsonage. Schleier thereupon left for North Texas to bring back his bride on New Year's Day.⁷⁰ Teacher Schleier remained at Fedor until 1886. Besides being teacher and church organist, he was postmaster for a short while, having the post office in his home. At another time he represented the federal government to the "toughs" in Knobs Hills, west of Fedor.⁷¹

In 1884 the congregation built a new school, a separate building from the church. It was built at the cost of some six hundred dollars and served its purpose for about twenty-seven years. It measured 24 x 36 feet and was 14 feet high.⁷² The double patent seats were one of the new features of which everyone was proud. A cloth blackboard was fixed across the entire rear wall to supplement the little one that had served before. Unfortunately Schleier's stay was cut short. In 1886 he was called to the Warda school where a peculiar situation relative to the public school question needed a man of his calibre.⁷³ Fedor, however, had similar difficulties and more

⁷⁰Birkmann, G.D.V., Sept. 27, 1934.

⁷¹Michalk, Brief History of Trinity Lutheran School, ms. in writer's possession. The western part of the present Lee County has always been known for its rough characters. Old timers still tell of the "neck-tie" parties popular at the time.

⁷²Birkmann-Michalk, Geschichte der Dreieinigkeits-Gemeinde zu Fedor, ms. in Fedor archives.

⁷³Infra, p. 57.

were to come, but the Wards congregation prevailed.⁷⁴

During the time that Schleier taught, Birkmann continued his mission trips beyond his own parish. Beginning in 1884 he received permission to go to Paige every other Sunday afternoon and once every other month on Sunday morning.⁷⁵ In 1886 he received permission to travel to Thorndale once every three months.⁷⁶ Now that Schleier left, Birkmann had to curtail some of his activities in order to give time to teaching school. Teachers were in great demand, much more than the supply could assure, and the congregation was forced to be without assistance for some time. In spite of every attempt to obtain a teacher, Fedor could not be supplied. Finally Pastor Stiemke, President of the Southern District, called Birkmann's attention to a Hermann Rhode in Gretna, Louisiana. Rhode had come from Germany and after taking a colloquium proved himself eligible. In the meanwhile he was working in a hotel at odd jobs, chiefly as bar-keeper. In 1887, he came

⁷⁴ Interview with Dr. G. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas. In Fedor the Lutheran school was the only one in the neighborhood. However intermittently public school was conducted in an old lodge hall. Sometimes it was open, but more often there was no school at all. Frequently the school term lasted only three months. (Interview with Karl Dube, Sr., Houston, Texas.) Later the so-called Patschke school was opened about four miles north of Fedor and another three miles east of the community. The third was close to Paige. Most of these did not begin till 1890. (Birkmann, Giddings News, May 6, 1932)

⁷⁵ Minutes, March 2, 1884.

⁷⁶ Minutes, April 4, 1886.

to Feder as temporary teacher, to be called permanently if he proved suitable. Rhode was able to work on the sentiment of the congregation so that he got a permanent call.⁷⁷ It wasn't long before he proved to be a terrible failure. The habits, probably acquired as bar-keeper, were too strong for Rhode. He would indulge in drink so heavily that he brutally mistreated his family. At first Birkmann treated him kindly, almost too leniently. After about two years he was dismissed.⁷⁸ Ironically enough he became pastor of some free-lance church after this. Though his parishoners were willing to close an eye to his drunkenness at first, it became too much even for them and they dismissed him.⁷⁹

Birkmann had to step into the school once more. Almost a year elapsed before a teacher could be procured. An attempt was made to call Werner of St. Paul's at Serbin. The appeal to the Serbin congregation to release Werner was made on the basis of the discontent in the congregation caused by the Rhode episode, which endangered the existence of the school. However these circumstances did not convince St. Paul's and they refused to grant Werner a release.⁸⁰ After waiting another

⁷⁷ Interview with Dr. G. Birkmann, Giddings, Texas.

⁷⁸ Der Lutheraner, VL (Oct. 22, 1899).

⁷⁹ Interview with K. Dube Sr., Houston, Texas.

⁸⁰ Minutes of St. Paul's Serbin, Nov. 10, 1899.

year, the congregation called Frederick Doepke of New Orleans who accepted and was installed on the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1890.⁸¹

It was quite natural that the school had suffered greatly during these many vacancies and changes. For long periods, school was discontinued entirely.⁸² When Doepke took over, the school took a new lease on life for he was evidently a competent teacher. For one thing, he introduced better discipline and raised the morale of the school. Pupils were expected to clean their shoes on entering the school room, books were now arranged neatly in the desks, and other marks of tidiness were required of these young rustics. Though formerly the pupils customarily spit on their slates and energetically wiped out the written work with their sleeves, a moistened rag or a sponge, though a rare item, had to answer this purpose.⁸³

The teaching in secular branches was improved greatly. English which had become more or less a dead language in this community was restored to a more prominent place. Rhode knew very little English and quite naturally neglected it. When some of the pupils on rare occasions left for secondary schools they had more trouble with English than with Latin.⁸⁴ Doepke's lessons were so

⁸¹Statistical Yearbook, 1890. Doepke remained until the end of 1893.

⁸²Interview with Karl Dube Sr., Houston, Texas.

⁸³Interview with Karl Dube Sr., Houston, Texas.

⁸⁴Interview with Karl Dube Sr., Houston, Texas.

well planned that even the problems were worked out. His instructions contained notes to the least detail. For this reason Birkmann found it easy to step into the classroom to assist Doepke when he became ill, which happened quite frequently. In fact the teacher's health gave way entirely so that he had to resign.⁸⁵

The school grew rapidly during this period, the enrollment being about eighty. With Doepke's resignation, the congregation had to cast about for a successor. After some time J. Daenzer accepted the call. He too was a competent teacher though the number of pupils was too great for him to handle. As a result, some of the children were often helpless and idle, a condition which lowered the standard of the school. When some of the boys entered the synodical high schools they found themselves below the average, especially in English which had been neglected by the teacher and disliked by the pupils. In fact the speaking of English seemed to go against the grain of the children, for they were loathe to use it outside of school.⁸⁶

The enlarged school was dedicated in 1889, but the promise of a continuous growth did not materialize. Soon after the dedication of the new school, the immigration into the community came to a stop.

⁸⁵ Interview with Dr. G. Birkmann, Ciddings, Texas. Doepke lived in Houston for about ten years. Later he began teaching again at Little Rock, Ark.

⁸⁶ Letter from the Rev. Paul Birkmann to the writer.

Before this time a number of families had moved to Thorndale where Birkmann went every three months to conduct services. After 1890 the exodus became so general that the growth of the Fedor congregation came to a complete standstill. In turn a congregation was organized at Thorndale, which today is the largest in the Texas District.

An important event for any of these congregations was to be the host to the District Synodical Convention. Fedor had this privilege when the Southern District met in its midst in 1901 from February 6 to 12. The Rev. Adolph Kramer read the doctrinal essay on the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer. Dr. F. Pieper, President of the General Synod, was the national representative.⁸⁷

When Daenzer left Fedor in 1902 to accept a call in Illinois,⁸⁸ Birkmann taught school during the vacancy. He was assisted for a time by his step-son, John W. Behnken, who was a ministerial student at the St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas. Behnken was well liked by the children because he showed them new kinds of games and particularly

⁸⁷ Synodical Report, Southern District, 1901. The State of Texas was a part of the Western District until 1882. Because of its phenomenal growth and extensive territory, the Western District was divided, and the State of Texas became part of the Southern District. In 1906 Texas became a separate District.

⁸⁸ Yearbook of 1902.

because he could make the study of geography real to them by calling their attention to local phenomena.⁸⁹

Teacher F. E. Redeker came in 1902 and was installed on September 29.⁹⁰ The congregation was again fortunate to have a teacher who was well liked by the children. Redeker loved to associate with them and spent much time riding and fishing with the boys. On Christmas and New Year's Day he purchased a large quantity of fireworks for the amusement of his pupils. The more ambitious ones received special aid in a night school which he conducted.⁹¹ But in spite of this he did not like Texas. During September, 1904 he received a call from Okawville, Illinois, which he wanted to accept. When the call was brought before the congregation, he gave health as a reason for accepting it. The people demurred because he had not been sick before. They knew he had frequently hinted that he wanted to go up north and believed this to be his real reason. No amount of arguing moved Redeker so that he finally tendered his resignation which was accepted under protest.⁹²

To replace Redeker, the aged Luebner was called from Greens Creek, Texas.⁹³ He was installed on the twentieth

⁹⁰Yearbook of 1902.

⁹¹Letter from the Rev. Paul Birkmann to the writer.

⁹²Minutes, Sept. 18, 1904.

⁹³Minutes, Sept. 20, 1904.

Sunday after Trinity,⁹⁴ 1904, and remained until 1909. There were about sixty children in his room, certainly a heavy teaching load for a man the age of Leubner.

Though the school had many interruptions and changes, the congregation grew doctrinally under the faithful ministry of Birkmann. Education was usually limited to the church school but it was sufficient for the simple needs of the people. Der Lutheraner was read regularly by the people and they were well informed on the work of their church. Spiritually they were a staunch people, helping to give a backbone to Texas Lutheranism. The statistical report for 1904 showed that there were 440 souls in the congregation, of which 240 were communicants and seventy voting members. There were sixty-seven in school at this time.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Yearbook, 1904.

⁹⁵Yearbook, 1904.

⁹⁶Carl Teinert was the leading member of the Wendish migration and at first a staunch supporter of Killen. Together they kept the colony intact during the early hardships. Teinert had been the congregation's center, but with the calling of a teacher (Leubner) he was asked to surrender his supervision of the music for the service. This led to a series of disputes, and Killen found himself embroiled in the two strong factions of the congregation. (For a full discussion of these discussions as well as earlier efforts to organize a congregation at Hobbs Creek, cp. Hepp, op. cit., XVI (April, 1948), pp. 25-28 and XVI (July, 1948), pp. 49-50.

HOLY CROSS EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

WARDA, TEXAS 1873 - 1905

The beginnings of Holy Cross Church lie in the dissensions within the Serbin congregation. After Ernst Leubner, teacher at St. Paul's Serbin, and his party left to organize St. Peter's church it did not take long for Karl Teinert, one of the other dissenters, to air his grievances against Pastor Kilian. He used his influence to persuade a number of farmers near the Rabbs Creek section that their interests would be best served if they should separate from the two Serbin congregations and organize their own parish.⁹⁶

Teinert had been deeply hurt in the loss of his leadership at Serbin and evidently sought to regain it by having a congregation of his own. Since the people near Rabbs Creek had difficulty in sending their children to the Serbin school, Teinert's efforts to break away were successful and a third parish was organized. What was first a request for

⁹⁶Karl Teinert was the leading member of the Wendish migration and at first a staunch supporter of Kilian. Together they kept the colony intact during the early hardships. Teinert had been the congregation's cantor, but with the calling of a teacher (Leubner) he was asked to surrender his supervision of the music for the services. This led to a series of disputes, and Kilian found himself embroiled in the two strong factions of the congregation. (For a full discussion of these dissensions as well as earlier efforts to organize a congregation at Rabbs Creek, cp. Repp, *op. cit.*, XVI (April, 1943), pp. 23-28 and XVI (July, 1943), pp. 49-53.

a separate school grew through the insistence of Teinert into a desire for a separate church. Finally on Sunday, March 17, 1873⁹⁷ they organized as the "Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession on Rabbs Creek, Fayette County, Texas"⁹⁸ with eight families represented⁹⁹ from both the St. Paul's and the St. Peter's congregations of Serbin. Two days later they applied for their releases from parent congregations but no action was taken.¹⁰⁰ Without waiting for a definite answer from the Serbin congregations the group resolved to call a pastor. A week after the initial meeting they called the Rev. Mr. Andrew Schmidt, of Louis Settlement, a congregation organized by Kilian.¹⁰¹ In drawing up the call Teinert's faction first thought of calling themselves a Wendish-German congregation, but this had to be dropped for the obvious reason that it was impossible to get a Wend pastor. Some of the members had thought of calling Proft of Fedor, who was

⁹⁷Der Lutheraner, XXX (Nov. 1, 1874).

⁹⁸Call to Andrew Schmidt, MS. in writer's collection.

⁹⁹A. E. Moebus, G.D.V., May 3, 1925.

¹⁰⁰They applied to St. Peter's March 19 (Der Lutheraner, XXX Nov. 1, 1874) and to St. Paul's, March 22 (Minutes of that congregation).

¹⁰¹Call to Andrew Schmidt, MS. in writer's collection.

¹⁰⁴Part of letter by Kilian to Suedger, Oct. 6, 1873. Serbin archives.

a Wend, but after the break with Serbin the congregation knew it would be impossible to get him. As a friend of Kilian, Proft would never have accepted the call.¹⁰² If the Rabbs Creek congregation was to get any pastor at all they would have to be satisfied with a German and for this reason Schmidt was elected. How Teinert's loyalty to the Wendish could brook this, is difficult to understand, but personal animosity to Kilian no doubt had much to do with it. What happened to the call to Schmidt is hard to say. Kilian wrote Buenger, May 6, 1873, that Schmidt had accepted the call and was expected to be at Rabbs Creek by July 1, where they were already building a church.¹⁰³ Between the time Schmidt had accepted the call and the time he was to be installed, word came from the President of the Western District that the newly organized congregation could not be recognized because of the friction with the Serbin congregations. This was quite natural since the members could not get a peaceful dismissal from Serbin and the officials of Synod dared not overlook the conduct of the faction.¹⁰⁴ A number of letters passed between President Buenger and Karl Teinert in which the Prsident tried to reason with him,

¹⁰² Interview with Mr. Teinert's son of Verdo, Texas, who had these letters in his possession.

¹⁰² *Supra*, p. 8.

¹⁰³ Draft of letter in Serbin archives.

¹⁰⁴ Draft of letter by Kilian to Buenger, Oct. 6, 1876. Serbin archives.

but to no avail. Even if everything had been done in an orderly manner, the great dearth of ministers would not have warranted such a small locality in getting a fourth minister when larger areas of the country had none at all.¹⁰⁵

When Teinert saw that his little group could receive no official recognition from the Missouri Synod and was refused a pastor, he said, "Then, I'll get one myself" ["Dann hol' ich mir einen"] and set out for Rutersville, where the Texas Synod had recently established a seminary for theological students. It seems that he had little difficulty in procuring one. When the first St. Peter's was organized, this Synod made investigations before they entered the field held by Missouri.¹⁰⁶ In this case however, the Texas Synod seemed to be more eager to make inroads into this colony and without further investigation assigned Eduard Zapf to this parish.¹⁰⁷ Zapf was a young man who had just come over from Switzerland and a graduate from the mission institution at St. Chrischona.¹⁰⁸

In Kilian's letter to Buenger of May 6, 1873, it was mentioned that the new group was building a church. Though

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Mr. Teinert's son of Warda, Texas, who had these letters in his possession.

¹⁰⁶ Repp, op.cit., (January, 1943), p. 115 f.

¹⁰⁷ Der Lutheraner, XXX (Nov. 1, 1874).

¹⁰⁸ Mgebroff, op.cit., p. 352.

the official name of the congregation indicated that the church was to be in Fayette County, the site of the first building was actually in Lee County, on the present Dunk's homestead.¹⁰⁹ On August 24, 1873 the new pastor was installed and perhaps the church was dedicated at the same time.¹¹⁰ The frame church with a small tower was naturally very simple, measuring about 20 x 30 feet.

Since these people were very much concerned about a school, it was understood that Zapf would also teach. Thus during the second week in November school was begun, however with only half-day sessions for the time being.¹¹¹ It planned to have full sessions later which were to continue for eight months of the year. In time equipment was purchased and the school was in full swing.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Killian refers to it as being in Fayette County, as does also the call to Rev. Schmidt. However according to the people in this vicinity the Dunk place is in Lee County. Whether the county line was changed or whether there was a general vagueness as to the line, is not certain. Killian even refers to the place as Serbin, indicating that he considered it merely a part of his parish. The present site is, of course, in Fayette County.

¹¹⁰ Historical note left by Killian - "Aug. 24, 1873 a number of Texas Synod men (3) celebrated their accession of the Cross Church in Serbin, Fayette Co." Serbin archives.

¹¹¹ Minutes of Cross Church, Nov. 9, 1873. (the first official minutes). Hereafter referred to as "Cross Minutes"

¹¹² Cross Minutes, Nov. 16, 1873.

But there were to be some serious difficulties for the new pastor. These people were naturally in sympathy with the Missouri Synod in spite of Teinert's influence. They tried to persuade Zapf to leave the Texas Synod and join Missouri but failed.¹¹³ This led to dissatisfaction and some of the people wanted to return to Serbin, especially the women.¹¹⁴ On the other hand there was much vindictiveness with a few. When Pastor Pallmer of St. Peter's church died, it was interpreted as an act of God, punishing the Serbin people for having refused to permit Rabbs Creek group to transfer.¹¹⁵

In the meanwhile there was steady growth in the congregation, although Kilian wrote in the latter part of 1873 that there were only thirteen families left in this parish. Zapf reported in April, 1874, that there were sixty communicants. He had confirmed six children during the first eight months.¹¹⁶ Perhaps Kilian could not realize that there might be some progress even though there were no accessions at the expense of his own flock. Several families living in the territory were won by Zapf, and this contributed to the growth of his congregation.

¹¹³Der Lutheraner, XXX (Nov. 1, 1874).

¹¹⁴Historical note left by Kilian - 1873. Serbin archives.

¹¹⁵Der Lutheraner, XXX (Nov. 1, 1874).

¹¹⁶Minutes of the Texas Synod, Sessions of April 30, 1874.

the Zapf was not to minister long in this parish for he died on June 23, 1874. He had planned to marry and before the news of his death and burial could reach his bride, she had left for Fayette County. A delegation from the congregation met the bewildered young woman at the train at Giddings to tell her of the death of her fiance.¹¹⁷ Zapf today lies buried in an unmarked grave with only a hackberry tree as tombstone and a rotting cedar railing as mute witness that someone lies buried at the spot.¹¹⁸

After Zapf's death, Teinert again turned to the Texas Synod for a minister, in spite of the fact that the congregation as such wanted a man from the Missouri Synod. Domineering as he was, he got his way. But unfortunately for Teinert, there was no man available, for the Texas Synod was also experiencing a shortage of ministers.¹¹⁹ However to take care of the emergency a Mr. F. Jesse, just recently licenced, was asked by Teinert to serve. When the congregation demanded that Jesse join the Missouri Synod he refused, believing that his own Synod was Lutheran enough.¹²⁰ When

¹¹⁷Interview with Mr. Kuntze of Warda, Texas.

¹¹⁸Mrs. Dunk pointed out the grave on her property.

¹¹⁹Mgebhoff, op. cit., p. 120.

¹²⁰Jesse did finally leave the Texas Synod and became a member of the Missouri Synod in 1890. Mgebhoff, Geschichte der Ersten Deutschen Evangelische Lutherischen Synode in Texas, p. 353.

the people became aware of this attitude, they severed connections with the Texas Synod and prepared to straighten out their difficulties with the Missouri Synod so that they might be served by them. Teinert was so enraged that he left the congregation. Both Serbin congregations were appealed to and public apology was made. To show the sincerity of their act the situation was aired in Der Lutheraner¹²¹ and an apology to the entire Synod was made. Greif of St. Peter's congregation was asked to be the vacancy pastor until such a time that they might be supplied by their pastor. St. Paul's evidently accepted the apology but refused to consider the congregation as a separate group for a number of years. Synod now acted quite quickly, seeing that they might lose this foothold, and a young graduate of the theological seminary of St. Louis was assigned to the congregation. So on the fourth Sunday of Advent, 1874, the Rev. Mr. A. L. Timotheus Stiemke was ordained and installed by Pastor Greif.¹²² The fact that the Synod recognized Holy Cross, as the congregation was now called, was another wound for Kilian who felt that the entire situation should have been solved only by doing away with this congregation, or at best, using the church for a school to supply this territory.

¹²¹XXX (Nov. 1, 1874).

¹²²Ibid., Jan. 15, 1875.

Stiemke was twenty-seven years of age and had been born in Washington County, Wisconsin. He was the first pastor of the Serbin area who was born in this country, and it might be added, that his arrival marked a new era for the entire group. He had been educated at the Martin Luther College at Buffalo, New York, and graduated from St. Louis. Before coming to Texas he had married Miss Anna Schoening of Ft. Dodge, Iowa.¹²³ Since he did not know Wendish and a number of people in his parish could not understand the German, Stiemke began to learn Wendish as well as he could. He often had the elders come to him evenings to instruct him. In time he was able to give Holy Communion in that language too.¹²⁴ During his stay in Holy Cross he won the hearts of his people and even to this day the older ones, who still remember him, speak of him with high praise. Strangely enough, these people still have vivid recollections of their schooling which they received from him. Dr. Birkmann describes him as not only a popular preacher, but well versed in many other fields. He was friendly, frank, and all the while most humble. His executive ability served

¹²³G. Spilman, Zum Gedächtniss des seligen Pastors A. L. Timotheus Stiemke.

¹²⁴G. Birkmann, G.D.V., Oct., 1932. n.d. on the clipping.

¹²⁵Holy Cross Lighter, Nov 2, 1878.

him well and later he became the first president of the newly organized Southern District, keeping this office as long as he remained in the South.¹²⁵ Kilian learned to like the man too and spoke of him with high regard even though he never liked the congregation. To accommodate these conflicting feelings Kilian later suggested to Buenger that he transfer Stiemke to some other parish and simply maintain Holy Cross as a branch school.¹²⁶ Obviously Kilian still had the Old World ideas of episcopal church government.

Though Synod had recognized Holy Cross, St. Paul's did not, least of all Kilian. When members of St. Paul's living in the Rabbs Creek territory wished to join Holy Cross, they could not get their transfers. Pastor Tirmenstein on his official visit to the congregations tried to settle this matter, but evidently he made no progress.¹²⁷

An early crisis for the young church came when the Rev. Mr. A. D. Greif was called away from St. Peter's congregation in Serbin. St. Peter's was predominantly German while Holy Cross had a large group of Wends who could not understand German. Tirmenstein and others felt that the interests of they asked that the matter be dropped entirely.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ein Brief des alten Past. G. Birkmann an einen Freund . . .
Oct. 22, 1924. Austin archives.

¹²⁶ Draft of letter by Kilian to Buenger, March 27, 1876.
Serbin archives.

¹²⁷ Cross Minutes, May 2, 1875.

¹²⁸ Cross Minutes, Feb. 2, 1876.

all could be best served if St. Peter's called Stiemke, who was German. Proft, a Wend, who had just resigned from the Fedor church could then be called to Holy Cross. St. Peter's followed the suggestion and called Stiemke. When Holy Cross heard of this they were quite angry, and unanimously resolved to keep Stiemke in spite of the advice of Tirmenstein. While they loved Stiemke, this was not the only reason. Proft was sickly and they felt that he could not handle both the school and the church.¹²⁸ Stiemke hesitated to make a decision and informed the congregation that he would seek the advice of Dr. Walther, President of the Synod. In the meanwhile he was permitted to be the vacancy pastor of St. Peter's.¹²⁹

Three weeks later Walther's letter was read to the congregation urging them release of their pastor. The congregation, however, would not accede to this but finally Stiemke submitted to his people and promised to return the call.¹³⁰ St. Peter's was not satisfied for they had still another plan. They proposed that the two congregations unite to form one parish with the pastor living in Serbin. This of course, did not suit the Holy Cross people any better and they asked that the matter be dropped entirely.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Supra, p. 11.

¹²⁹ Cross Minutes, Jan. 1, 1876.

¹³⁰ Cross Minutes, Jan. 19, 1876.

¹³¹ Cross Minutes, Feb. 2, 1876.

The popularity and success of Stiemke is also quite evident from the fact that the number of members in this vicinity who belonged to St. Paul's and wanted to join Holy Cross, became alarmingly great. Kilian wrote to his son that about one seventh of his congregation wanted to leave him.¹³² It was at this time that Kilian again protested to Buenger on the entire arrangement. He argued that St. Paul's had voted this territory a school, but never a separate congregation. Now Synod had even confirmed the act of these "separatists" by placing them on an equal footing.¹³³ Evidently Kilian did not get much satisfaction for conditions remained as they were. The matter was finally settled when the Rev. J. F. Koesterling came from Missouri in 1878. As a result St. Paul's fully recognized Holy Cross and the question of transfers was more or less settled.¹³⁴ The next year Holy Cross officially joined the Missouri Synod.

Stiemke had interests beyond his immediate parish. Though Winchester was close, he was interested in the efforts being made there to start a congregation for a number of Germans. Simon Suess, a theological candidate, had been sent into the neighborhood to explore the possibilities for

¹³² Draft of letter by Kilian to his son, Hermann, Feb. 28, 1876. Serbin archives.

¹³³ Draft of letter by Kilian, March 27, 1876. Serbin archives.

¹³⁴ Minutes of St. Paul's, Serbin, Jan. 13, 1878.

a church, but thus far nothing definite had taken place. Holy Cross was anxious to have things progress and promised to help Suess to build a house whenever the people at Winchester thought it ripe to begin work there. In time this project failed and Suess left to take a charge at Freiburg, Texas Near Engle .

Stiemke served Holy Cross some five years when he suddenly got two calls, one from New Orleans and one from Houston. The matter of the New Orleans call was easily settled, but when it came to the Houston call there was a more serious problem. In Houston the congregation had had difficulty with Rev. Caspar Braun, who had severed connections with Synod and had gotten hold of the church and the property, leaving the conservative Lutheran group without a pastor and a place to worship. In spite of the evident need of getting a pastor, Holy Cross was not convinced that Houston was the more important charge, because they saw the harm that might come to their own school and church. The call was therefore returned but when it was sent the second time Stiemke persuaded the congregation to allow him to leave for Houston.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Cross Minutes, Jan. 1, 1880. The Houston congregation is the present Trinity Lutheran Church, the largest congregation of the Missouri Synod in Texas.

Biography see G. L. V., Nov. 11, 1887. La Grange Journal, Nov. 1, 1887. or Houston Post, 1888.

¹³⁶ Synodical Report, Western District, 1879.

Though Holy Cross had lost its pastor, they were undaunted and immediately resolved to call a new man. Geyer of St. Peter's was asked to serve during the vacancy.¹³⁶

Yet a year passed before a minister was procured and the school suffered considerably, in fact, was closed entirely. After many months of waiting, the Rev. Mr. Gottfried Buchschacher was called from Algiers, Louisiana, and installed Sexagesima Sunday, 1881, by Geyer.¹³⁷

Buchschacher was a most colorful character with an interesting life story.¹³⁸ He was born in Eriswyl, Bern Canton, Switzerland, and after a liberal education left Europe to come to America. While in this country he became interested in the Methodist ministry and was ordained in 1875 or 1876. He served in the Methodist church at Yorktown and Fredericksburg, Texas. While in Texas, his attention was called to the Missouri Synod. Consequently he had a long correspondence with Dr. Walther and assiduously read Der Lutheraner. He became convinced of the teachings of the Lutheran Church and finally took a colloquy for the ministry at New Orleans in 1879.¹³⁹ His first charge in

¹³⁶ Cross Minutes, Jan. 6, 1880.

¹³⁷ Der Lutheraner, XXVII (April 1, 1881).

¹³⁸ Buchschacher was born May 8, 1852. For his interesting biography see G.D.V., Nov. 11, 1927, La Grange Journal, Nov., 1927, or Houston Post, 1925.

¹³⁹ Synodical Report, Western District, 1879.

the Lutheran Church was at Algiers, Louisiana, and from there he came to Holy Cross.

The scout reports available show that Holy Cross had been growing steadily. At the end of the first year Stiemke reported twenty-seven pupils in the school, including five who were not members.¹⁴⁰ The next year [1875] he reported thirty-five pupils,¹⁴¹ and this figure soon grew to forty pupils.¹⁴² The first report the Rev. Buchschacher sent in at the end of 1881 showed that the school had soon regained its standing with sixty-three pupils. There were at this time 320 souls, fifty-four of which were voting members.¹⁴³

With the work thus begun by Stiemke and now successfully carried on by Buchschacher, the church building of 1873 was soon too small. In April, 1881, the question of a new church was discussed. Mr. T. Hebrig, a member, offered ten acres for a new church site, which offer was readily accepted. With such a good example, \$ 715.00 was immediately subscribed. Elaborate plans were drawn up calling for a church 70 x 34 x 20 feet with a tower of 70 x 75 feet.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰Synodical Report, Western district, 1875.

¹⁴¹Synodical Report, Western district, 1876.

¹⁴²Synodical Report, Western district, 1879.

¹⁴³Synodical Report, Western district, 1882.

¹⁴⁴Cross Minutes, April 3, 1881.

When the actual cost for such a building was figured out, it proved too expensive and a smaller building was planned. The new plan called for a building 60 x 30 x 20 feet.¹⁴⁵ It was a wise move that the sight was changed, for the congregation was now two and a half miles farther from Serbin and served the general interest much better. Holy Cross is now located at this site, called Warda. The old church was torn down and the lumber was salvaged for the new church.¹⁴⁶ Proft who had been helpful in designing St. Paul's church, also made a model for the pulpit in the new church,¹⁴⁷ and carved some of the intricate designs. The new church was dedicated to the service of the Triune God on the Sunday after Easter, 1882, midst great festivities.¹⁴⁸

Besides teaching four days a week and being in the middle of a building program, Buchschacher's interest for organizing work in new fields could not be stemmed. As early as the summer of 1881 he received permission to preach every two weeks in Giddings.¹⁴⁹ In time he helped organize

¹⁴⁵ Cross Minutes, May 24, 1881.

¹⁴⁶ Birkmann, G.D.V., July 12, 1934. Elsewhere Dr. Birkmann wrote that the old church was moved to the present site and used for a school (G.D.V., March 4, 1937) however the minutes show that the school was entirely rebuilt as well as the church, though at a slightly later date.

¹⁴⁷ Cross Minutes, Sept. 17, 1881.

¹⁴⁸ Der Lutheraner, XXXVIII (May 1, 1882).

¹⁴⁹ Cross Minutes, July 24, 1881.

a church at Giddings, Winchester, Greens Creek, and Corn Hill or Walburg. Throughout his busy life, Buchschacher was a most diligent missionary. In harmony with his mission zeal a unique service was held in Warda at the time of the pastoral conference of September, 1883. Two missionaries to Texas were ordained at the time: Theodore Kuhn for Dallas and vicinity and J. Schwoy for Colorado County.¹⁵⁰

With the growth of the school it soon became apparent that some assistance must be procured for the young pastor. Two years had already been spent teaching and the congregation resolved to get help. Through the advice of Stienke, now President of the Southern District, Henry Werner was temporarily engaged for the school. Werner, born in Germany, had come to this country at the age of eighteen. After some private instructions and a number of terms at the normal school in Addison, Illinois, he was prepared for the teaching profession. Due to illness he came South and now, after his recovery, he was proposed to the Warda congregation.¹⁵¹ After teaching a few months he was so successful that Holy Cross wanted to call him permanently. They resolved to buy

Annual Report, Southern District, 1883.

¹⁵⁰ Birkmann, G.D.V., Feb. 8, 1940. Schwoy did not remain in Texas long. He went north and later became professor at Concordia Institute, Bronxville, New York.

¹⁵¹ Birkmann, Texas Distriktsbote, X (No. 4, Nov., 1925).

a house for him and had everything ready for him to become a permanent teacher. Werner felt that he could not accept the call because of his health, and the congregation decided to call someone else. Werner soon left for Giddings where he taught for a short time.

Turning again to Stiemke for advice, the congregation called F. Regener of New Orleans as teacher.¹⁵² There were eighty-two children in the school and it is no small wonder that Buchschacher needed help. Since the congregation had grown to 485 souls, it was to support two men.¹⁵³ Regener proved to be a good man and the children learned to like him very much. He often entertained them with the violin, using it in his singing lessons.¹⁵⁴

The size of the school made it necessary that some restrictions be made on children of non-members. Consequently the congregation passed a resolution that such children should not be accepted without the specific consent of the congregation.¹⁵⁵ Already in the next meeting consent

¹⁵² Cross Minutes, Second Pentecost Day, 1883.

¹⁵³ Synodical Report, Southern district, 1883.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Mrs. Dunk, Warda, Texas.

¹⁵⁵ Cross Minutes, Sept. 2, 1883.

¹⁵⁶ Cross Minutes, Sept. 23, 1883.

¹⁵⁷ Cross Minutes, Oct. 4, 1883.

was given to two families, one of which promised to join by New Year.¹⁵⁶ Evidently the opportunities could not be overlooked in spite of the crowded conditions.

After all, however, there was a limit to the capacity of the school building, even though it seemed that there was no limit to the teaching load. In October, 1885, the matter of adding a second room was brought up. After some discussion it was resolved to introduce the second room, but with the understanding that state aid should be sought for the second teacher's support. While it was understood this was to be a temporary measure, there was no telling how "temporary" it might be. Children in both rooms were to be instructed in religion, either in the morning or in the afternoon. Even the children of such who were in the room supported by state aid were expected to pay tuition to the church. Since the present building could not be divided into two rooms, it was resolved to build an addition to the schoolhouse.¹⁵⁷

The question of accepting state aid had vexed some of the other congregations previous to this. The general opinion throughout the Synod was that no state funds should be accepted for the support of parish schools, since this practice was regarded as a mixture of Church and State and would lead to state control of the religious training in the schools. Kilian at one time was inclined to accept state

¹⁵⁶Cross Minutes, Sept. 30, 1883.

¹⁵⁷Cross Minutes, Oct. 4, 1885.

aid until his son Gerhard gave him the Synodical viewpoint.¹⁵⁸ In Fedor a similar condition had arisen and state aid was accepted for a short time.¹⁵⁹ In order to understand this confusion, the conditions of the time and the background of the leaders must be taken into consideration. Both Kilian and Proft were from the Old World where the state supported religious schools. It was quite natural that his idea was carried over into the present situation. Had Kilian been in closer contact with Synod, the vexing problem would not have confused him. Fortunately it never got far in the Serbin congregations. However, Buchschacher was not only of the Old World, but came from a Reformed background where the state and church relationship was confused. It is not strange therefore that he did not share the view of Synod. Why the teacher, who certainly should have known better since he was instructed in a synodical school, did not clear up the situation, is hard to say. Perhaps he regarded the support of the state merely as an extreme emergency measure, since the school was too large for him to handle.

There is another angle to the question which was probably the strongest factor of all. In Texas the public school system was slow in getting a firm hold on the various

¹⁵⁸Repp, op.cit., July, 1943, p. 54.

¹⁵⁹Supra, p. 9.

communities, and for this reason ministers were frequently hired to teach in the schools if these were already partly supported by a congregation. This additional support was welcomed by struggling congregations and underpaid ministers. The acceptance of state funds was common practice for instance in the Texas Synod. In 1870, President Jaeggli of this Synod urged the pastors to take advantage of the liberal school laws and so relieve their own poverty-stricken conditions. As a result parish schools were started in great numbers by the Texas Synod. To the pastor it was a safeguard against want, and for the congregation an assurance that it would not be expected to dig too deeply into its own pockets. Due to this practice the spirit of responsibility was almost crushed, for in some instances congregations hired their pastors by contract from year to year without a regard for the Lutheran doctrine of the divinity of the call. In 1887 this Synod made an attempt to remedy the evil but the experiment had just about killed the spirit for the parish schools.¹⁶⁰

With a local condition such as this the confusion in the minds of the people can well be understood. All around them Lutheran schools were supported by the state. The people in Warda argued, "Why should we not also benefit from the school fund since we pay taxes? Why should we support two teachers

¹⁶⁰Minutes, Nov. 11, 1887.

¹⁶⁰Mgebhoff, op. cit., p. 216 f.

in our community in addition to paying taxes?" It was a human way of looking at the situation and the congregation regarded state aid as the solution to their problem. Buchschacher felt that there was nothing serious involved, since he was interested in doing mission work at Corn Hill (Walburg) and he thought he could not afford to spend the time in the schoolroom.

There were, however, some in the congregation who viewed the practice of accepting state aid with alarm. A Mr. Tr. Zoch protested that it was dangerous. Others asked what would be done if someone refused to send his child to the second room since it was public? In answer to this question the congregation decided that no one could be forced to submit to the new practice.¹⁶¹

The congregation applied to the state for subsidy and a Miss Knippa was hired to teach in the new room, receiving part of her salary from the public school funds. But this did not settle the question for it constantly simmered in private discussions. District Synod was held in this part of the state the next year and someone proposed that Schwan, President of Synod, be asked to give a supplementary essay on the question of state aid for schools when he delivered the main essay at the convention. Whether this request

¹⁶¹Cross Minutes, Nov. 15, 1885.

came from dissenters in Warda or whether it was proposed by the other pastors is not certain.¹⁶² At any rate, when Synod was held at Serbin in 1886 the question was thoroughly aired to the interest of a great number of the laity. The essay treated the matter under four headings:

"1. May a Christian congregation enter into such a relationship with the state schools that it receives state school money either to support its entire school or even for a part?"

"2. May a Christian congregation or a Christian parish schoolteacher admit that the use of or the spiritual application of the divine Word may be forbidden for the greater part of the school day?"

"3. Is a Christian congregation right when it sacrifices its authority to supervise the school for some temporal advantages?"

"4. Can Christians rightly take offense at this mixing of church and state?"¹⁶³

Each of these questions was reviewed at length in the presence not only of the delegates to the District Synod but also of a large number of the members of Warda, who were given the permission to speak at any point and as much as they cared.

With the matter so thoroughly aired, it was settled for everyone, once and for all. When Buchschacher made his report to the congregation at the next meeting, he repeated in outline

¹⁶²The synodical report states that the questions were set forth by the two congregations of Serbin. Whether this is to be taken literally or whether it is stated in this manner in order to leave out the personal element, is, of course, uncertain. Cp. Synodical Report, Southern District, 1886.

¹⁶³Ibid. Minutes, Aug. 15 and 22, 1886.

¹⁶⁴Called Oct. 31 and by Jan. 2 he was secretary. Minutes in interval lost.

the chief reasons why state aid should not be accepted. He had also been told privately to study the matter until vacation time and make every possible effort to correct the situation as soon as possible.¹⁶⁴ The congregation voted to decline any subsidy for its school at the same time that it raised the tuition and asked all communicants to contribute an additional fifty cents per year for the school.¹⁶⁵ At the end of the school term in June the congregation severed its connection from the public school fund of the state.¹⁶⁶ During this time trouble arose between the teacher and the congregation over some personal matters, in which it seems both parties erred.¹⁶⁷ Eventually all concerned acknowledged their mistake but Regener thought it best to accept a call to the North. Holy Cross called Schleier of Fedor who accepted chiefly because of the fear that a public school would be started in Warda if there was a prolonged vacancy. Schleier was installed in November or December of 1886.¹⁶⁸ and a Miss F. Schubert taught at various times before. The heavy teaching load which had caused the discussion had not been reduced for Schleier was expected to teach without assistance. A few years later an attempt was made to cut

¹⁶⁴ Cross Minutes, Feb. 21, 1886.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Minutes.

¹⁶⁶ Cross Minutes, June 27, 1886.

¹⁶⁷ Cross Minutes, Aug. 13 and 29, 1886.

¹⁶⁸ Called Oct. 31 and by Jan. 2 he was secretary. Minutes in interval lost.

down enrollment by requiring beginners to be at least eight years of age.¹⁶⁹ Still nothing was done to get a second teacher. The question dragged on and whenever it was brought up in a congregational meeting either nothing was done about it or the proposition was voted down. Finally in the November 15, 1891 meeting a few ardent supporters of the school offered to make additional contributions if an assistant teacher was engaged. This proposal was accepted although there is no record that an assistant had been procured until August 14, 1892. This was A. Bernstein who taught for six months at the salary of \$ 27.50 per month plus board.¹⁷⁰

Because the congregation refused to adopt measures earlier for procuring a second teacher, a public school was established across the road from the parish school. This helped to lighten the pupil load at Holy Cross, but by no means solved the situation. Besides Bernstein, a Mr. W. Schubert and a Miss E. Schubert taught at various times before 1904. Since these assistants were not trained as teachers, applicants to the position were examined by the school board before they were accepted.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Cross Minutes, Aug. 20, 1890.

¹⁷⁰ Cross Minutes.

¹⁷¹ Cross Minutes, July 22, 1894.

Parents who sent their children to the public school were required to send them to the parochial school by the age of eleven if they wanted them to be confirmed.¹⁷² Later everyone was required to send his child to the parish school at least three years in order to have them confirmed. Such parents were requested to pay eight dollars per year tuition while the others paid only five dollars.¹⁷³ In this way many of the children attended parish school at an earlier age than they would have ordinarily, yet the danger of a secularized education was never overcome. Strangely enough, the congregation which supposedly began because it wanted a school of its own and for this reason broke away from St. Paul's at Serbin was the first to compromise in the school question. No doubt much of this was due not to the change of heart of the original members but because many of the new families were not as interested in a parish school as they should have been.

Though the Southern District had met several times in Texas, Warda had not had the opportunity to entertain such a large gathering. However it did have the chance in 1892 when Synod met there February 3 to 9. President Schwan was again present at the convention in his official capacity. The Rev. Mr. W. Heyne of New Orleans delivered the chief

¹⁷² Cross Minutes, July 22, 1894

¹⁷³ Cross Minutes, Feb. 20, 1899.

essay on the "Doctrine of Holy Baptism, and its Meaning and Importance for the Faith and Life of a Christian." Some eighty-three persons were in attendance, not counting the members of local congregations.¹⁷⁴

The statistics for 1904 show that there were 610 souls, 305 communicants, and 100 voters, with eighty-two children in the school.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴Synodical Report, Southern District, 1892.

¹⁷⁵Statistical Yearbook, 1904.

When a congregation could not support a teacher, it was assumed that the pastor would teach the children. In such cases, school was usually conducted only four days out of the week.

The standards of the Lutheran parish schools fell short of present day standards, but compared with the school systems of the day they were surprisingly high. The few public schools in the neighborhood had difficulty in getting competent teachers. Many of them had not even finished High School, while Lutheran teachers had at least a junior college training and the pastors had completed five years of college, although limited chiefly to the study of theology. In one respect, however, the parish schools were below the public schools of their day, and that was in the teaching of English. In most cases this subject was merely tolerated in the classroom, though the congregation realized that it was their responsibility to teach it. Occasionally when the new

APPENDIX A

Sidelights on the Parish Schools

The schools played an important role in the history of the Wendish congregations in and around Serbin. This is natural since they were an integral part of the congregational life of most of the Lutheran churches of the Missouri Synod of that period, reflecting the common background of conservative Old World Lutheranism. When a congregation could not support a teacher, it was assumed that the pastor would teach the children. In such cases, school was usually conducted only four days out of the week.

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teacher was considered, the knowledge of English was set down as a requirement. When the congregation at Serbin had trouble with the encroaching public school they stipulated that the second teacher must be able to teach through the medium of the English language. Mr. H. Werner was chosen because he could meet this requirement. Even under such circumstances English was not stressed as one might expect. This was quite natural considering that German, or perhaps Wendish, was the only language spoken in the community. The Rev. Mr. Hermann Schmidt, present pastor at Serbin who attended St. Paul's as a child relates that hardly anyone got beyond the "Bird" Reader. Even today the children have a distinctively heavy accent.

After all the primary concern of the Lutheran congregations was not to supply a secular training. They would not have gone to the expense of maintaining their own schools if that had been their chief objective. They were interested first of all in the spiritual training of their youth, and for this their teachers had received a good education. Men like Leubner, G. Kilian, Werner, Schleier and the others were real theologians and they had the aptitude to instill a humble, Christian, God-fearing faith into the hearts of their pupils. This accounts for the doctrinal solidarity of these churches down to the present generation. On the other hand, these congregations were also concerned that

others maintained such schools. In 1895 Buchschacher organized a congregation at Greens Creek and an appeal was made to St. Paul's at Serbin to help in the erection of a church. This plea was turned down because Greens Creek was satisfied with a public school and had made no provisions for a school of its own.¹⁷⁴ When this was later changed by organizing a school, a collection was raised and given to the new church at Greens Creek.¹⁷⁵

School attendance was frequently very irregular. As already noted, there were many interruptions, especially in Fedor with its frequent changes in teachers. At such times when the pastor taught, sessions were often dropped to allow him to visit a sick or a dying parishoner at some distant point. Even where there were regular teachers, a death in the congregation meant that school had to be dropped, not only because many of the pupils would be among the mourners in the interrelated communities, but because the teacher was required to play the organ during the funeral service. At other times a siege of bad weather or the demands on the farm disrupted any attempt at a regular schedule. Malaria was another factor in disturbing the school routine.

¹⁷⁴Minutes of St. Paul's, Serbin, Jan. 6, 1895.

¹⁷⁵Minutes of St. Paul's, Serbin, Oct. 27, 1895.

The school term did not begin in the fall as now, but immediately after Easter. Since confirmation and graduation were almost synonymous, children began school immediately after Easter after the confirmation class had graduated. Instead of the usual written examinations at the end of a term, public oral examination was held the week before Palm Sunday. On the day before the examination, cedar boughs and evergreens were collected and hung over the doors and around the school room to give the event a festive air. Where there were two rooms, one room was dismissed while the other had its examination. Fond parents and the school board were sure to be present to hear the recitations of the children. During the years this practice lost its original purpose and became a "show-off" day for the teachers and pupils, and so in time it was done away with.

The majority of the teachers were greatly concerned over the irregular attendance of their pupils, especially G. Kilian of Serbin. It was his practice to jump on his horse after the school day and visit the home of the absentees. Kilian was a conscientious teacher in many other respects too. He spent hours with deficient pupils both before and after school. The entire lesson in religion had to be recited to him before school so that he might be assured that no one had been overlooked. Kilian may be characterized as a strict disciplinarian who was master of

the situation at all times, energetic, modest, and tireless in his duty. He was hard to become acquainted with, however, and thus was often misunderstood.¹⁷⁶

There were many happy hours in these frontier schools. During the dinner hour the boys frequently wandered off to hunt and fish in the nearby woods and streams. Sitting on the banks waiting for a "bite", the boys leisurely ate their lunch which consisted chiefly of a few cucumbers, always a welcome treat for a Wend youngster. On the way home from school they enjoyed some of the forbidden pleasures, such as racing their donkeys, even swimming, and occasionally visiting the neighbor's sugar cane or watermelon patch.

These people loved their children and did everything within their limited means to give them the best education.¹⁷⁷ Had they depended upon the state for this, they would have been without schools for many years. When the public schools tried to enter into these communities, the members were forbidden to send their children because the schools were considered "godless" not providing for the spiritual life of their children. We can well sympathize with these hardy people and the results of their efforts to

¹⁷⁶ Birkmann, G.D.V., Feb. 2, 1933.

¹⁷⁷ One man, according to Dr. Birkmann, had 18 children in two marriages. He paid school tuition over a period of forty years.

obtain a religious training were quite apparent. Though not a perfect community, they represented a people where crime and immorality was never a serious problem and the misdemeanors and occasional strayings were carefully dealt with by the congregation.

Though engrossed in their congregational affairs, there are frequent references in the minutes how they answered the call of some needy member whose barn or house had burned down, or of some poor widow who needed support. Likewise when one of their members had a son to prepare for the Church, the congregation took up a free-will offering to assist the parents. Even outside of the immediate parish, calls for help were answered for a church that had burned down or for some struggling congregation that needed help to build a house of worship or to support its pastor. These relatively poor congregations were ready to share their bread with the needy.

1902	440	330	70	67
1903	440	340	70	65
1904	440	340	70	67

¹The number 18 is based on report on congregational minutes, but the figure 21 is the official number returned to district. Very likely the discrepancy is due to the fact that they cover different time periods.

²Rev. Maish's report is for two schools, very likely at one of his preaching stations and at home in Padua.

APPENDIX B
 Statistics for Trinity Lutheran Church

Wards, Texas

Statistics of Trinity Lutheran Church

Fedor, Texas

Year	Souls	Communicants	Voting Members	Pupils
1872				
1873	149		27	26
1874			26	15 (21) ¹
1875	320		54	25
1877	193		32	25
1879	235	305	34	35
1881	354	375	45	70 ²
1882	410	315	53	50
1890	450	250	67	77
1898	460	275	70	65
1900	375	225	60	62
1902	440	250	70	67
1903	440	240	70	65
1904	440	240	70	67

¹The number 15 is based on report on congregational minutes, but the figure 21 is the official number released to district. Very likely the discrepancy is due to the fact that they cover different time periods.

²Rev. Maisch's report is for two schools, very likely at one of his preaching stations and at home in Fedor.

Statistics for Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Warda, Texas

A. RECEIVED

Year	Souls	Communicants	Voting Members	Pupils
1874		60		27
1875				35
1877				30
1879			32	40
1881	320		54	63
1883	485		76	82
1890	590	305	103	87
1898	610	315	110	75
1900	610	315	107	80
1902	610	315	105	86
1903	620	310	105	85
1904	610	305	100	82

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