

ZSJ HISTORY

1875-1885

One of the early settlers in the Sheffield area was Gottlieb Kugler, who originally immigrated from Germany and first settled in Wisconsin. In 1869, he made a trip to see Iowa and brought his family the next year after purchasing 160 acres of land in West Fork Township. At this time the town of Sheffield had only 175 people and there was no Lutheran church in town. These first Lutherans were served by Pastor Eckhoff who traveled from Nora Springs about once a month. By 1874 the town of Sheffield was plotted by the Gilman brothers. By this time there was a railroad depot, general store, hotel, blacksmith shop and hardware store. In 1875, the school opened, and enough Lutheran families had settled in the area that an organized congregation was founded. Services were held in Culver School about 5 miles east of town. Original charter members were Gottlieb Kugler, Carl Meyer, Christian Sieveking, Fred Meyer, C Gerfen, August Schaefer, Karl



Gerfen, H Raatz and John Bloede. By 1876, the town of Sheffield was incorporated and held its first city elections. On November 25, 1878, 5 acres of land were purchased for \$50 from August Schaefer and this land became the site of St John Lutheran Church and cemetery. On February 10, 1883, plans for a new church building were made and all the able members assisted in erecting the first church building.

The first baptisms were Sophie and Anna Meier in October 1875. Although there were many deaths in the first years, especially among children, the first recorded death and burial was Baby Bloede on April 6, 1881. It is believed that there are many young children buried in the cemetery's SW corner that remain unmarked because there were no records. In 1880, the first marriage between Wilhelm Gerfen and Anna Timmerman was celebrated. By 1883, a group of 3 young men and 5 women were confirmed in the newly created building.

Christmas in these early years was always exciting. The church deacons would read the list of members and each family member would receive a bag of candy, nuts and fruit. The tree was fresh cut from the cemetery and decorated with tinsel, ornaments and candles for lights. Someone was designated with a stick and wet sponge in case of fire.

Other notable historical events in national and world history were:

- 1865, the end of the US Civil War
- 1870-1880, great unrest in the British empire, Russia, Germany, South America and Africa; Life expectancy increased to 41 in Europe
- 1870-1885, upbreaks of cholera, Scarlet Fever, Small pox, yellow fever and ague kill nearly 3 million people world wide
- 1875, the first Kentucky Derby is run, and gold is discovered in the Black Hills
- 1876, the US celebrated its centennial; the reservation system is created for Native Americans, creating many "wars," including the Battle of Little Big Horn; and a 3-year drought kills an estimated 30 million people in India, China, and Brazil
- 1877, Crazy Horse surrenders and the Nez Perce battle the US military
- 1878, Edison patents the phonograph
- 1879, the first Woolworths store opens in NY
- 1880, The US census show over 50 million people; the French begin a failed attempt to create the Panama Canal
- 1881, President Garfield is killed; Booker T Washington opens the Tuskegee Institute; Sitting Bull surrenders; there is a gunfight at the OK corral in Tombstone, AZ
- 1882, Jesse James' decade long robberies ends with his death
- 1883, the first Vaudeville theater opens in Boston; the Brooklyn Bridge opens; 5 time zones are created across the US
- 1884, the first post season baseball games occur
- 1885, the Washington Monument is completed; ATT is incorporated; the Statue of Liberty arrives in NY harbor