

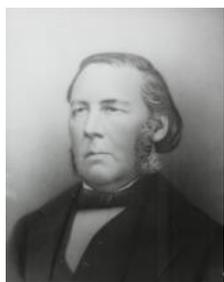
East Koshkonong Lutheran Church 1844-2019

Celebrating 175 years in Ministry

(The article below was taken from a pamphlet of the 145th Anniversary of EKLC from 1989. Copies of this pamphlet are available in the Church Library)

Velkommen to Koshkonong Prairie where the Norwegian Lutheran Church had its humble beginning in America.

In 1825, groups of people from Norway began to leave their homes and familiar surroundings to make the long and dangerous journey to America. Not until 1839 did any immigrants begin settling on Koshkonong Prairie, a location which fulfilled their needs of good land, healthful climate, and enough room for future expansion. Because of the many immigrants over a widespread area, the Koshkonong settlement was divided into two parishes, East and West Koshkonong. This brochure tells the history of the East Koshkonong Lutheran Churches.



A devout Norwegian layman was concerned about the religious needs of his countrymen who had emigrated to America, where there was no State Church. Peter Sornson, a fabric dyer by trade, offered to provide passage and living expenses for any Lutheran pastor who would minister to the early settlers in America. A young ordained pastor, Johannes Wilhelm Christian Dietrichson, consented to carry out this work and came to Koshkonong Prairie in August 1844.

J.W.C. Dietrichson

The first service conducted by Pastor Dietrichson was held on September 1, 1844, in a log barn on the Amund Anderson farm. On October 10, 1844, Pastor Dietrichson stated that his purpose in coming to this country was to establish a Norwegian Lutheran congregation. On that date, forty families and a few single persons accepted Dietrichson's suggested constitution establishing the East Koshkonong Lutheran Church.

A log church was built on one-half acre of land purchased for 63 cents by Pastor Dietrichson for the Norwegian Lutheran Church. The first home of the East Koshkonong Lutheran Church was dedicated on January 31, 1845.



Log

In 1858, the log church was torn down in order to build a larger stone structure.

The carpenters threw out everything, but the members of the congregation put the logs and furnishing into piles to be auctioned off. One pile included a baptismal font made from an aspen log by Gunnel Olson Vindeg, the only settler who had a turning lathe. When Mrs. Lars Kravick saw the baptismal font, she told her husband that he must buy that pile. Thus, the baptismal font became, and still is, the property of the Kravick family, although it has been at the First East Koshkonong Church since 1893.



Stone Church

The stone church was built in 1858 at the cost of \$3,000. Inside the west-side entrance was a stairway to the choir loft, the pulpit was centered on the east wall, and wood-burning stoves heated the building.



Mural of Koshkonong Prairie recently painted in Friendship Hall

Everything was progressing well until the congregation became involved in a controversy on the predestination—which centered on the paradox between the primacy of God's grace in salvation and the responsibility of the people whom God's grace was given. The Koshkonong Churches, along with over 250 other congregations in the United States, fell victim to this controversy, causing churches and synods to split in the 1880's.

In 1893, First East Koshkonong church was built west of the old stone church. Ole Gunnulson, a son of Gunnul Olson Vindeg, one of the first settlers, designed and built the church at a cost of \$13,500. There were no blue prints. The design model that Ole Gunnulson used when constructing the church is now held by David Gunnulson, great-grandson of Ole. (This model was given to EKLC and is now located in the glass display case at the Upper Church).



First East Church

Because of the unique design (cross built into ceiling, curved pews), many University of Wisconsin students come to the First East to study its architecture. Work is in progress on an application for registration of the First East Koshkonong Church on the National Register of Historic Places.



Memorial Monument

On October 10, 1894, fifty years after the first service in the log barn, the Norwegian Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America erected a granite monument where the barn had stood (now the Sanford Anderson farm—2019 Ron Anderson Farm) "Now stands this memorial as a witness for coming generations as long as hard granite can defy the ravages of time."

In 1897, the old stone church was taken down and the quarry stone was used in the construction of the basement of the East Koshkonong Church. The architects were Louis F. Claude and Edward F. Starck. According to Oscar Tinius Olson, a member of the church, the building is modeled on a rather famous Norwegian church. The Gamle Vestre Aakershus Kirke near Oslo. The cost was \$12,700. Nelius and Lars Lein, cement contractors, and many volunteers completed the basement in 1910.



East Koshkonong

The merger of three Norwegian church bodies in 1917 largely restored spiritual unity to the Koshkonong community. The "Koshkonong Centennial" was celebrated in 1944 at First East, East and West Koshkonong churches. These churches still stand on their original grounds.

The language used at services was Norwegian exclusively until the 1920's. Transition from Norwegian to English became very marked during Pastor Krostu's term of service. When he began (1885), all his preaching and teaching were done in Norwegian. At the close of his pastorate (1927), one third of the preaching and all confirmation instruction were in English. Before the retirements of pastors Borge and Thompson, English was used exclusively...

(This brochure in its entirety is available in the Church Library).