



Madison County Genealogical Society



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Early Churches in Madison Township

First Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church was organized in 1870 under the guidance of two ministers from Columbus: Rev. Sheldon Jackson, who preached the first sermon, and Rev. J. M. Wilson, who became the first minister.

The first Presbyterian church was built in 1871 and dedicated in 1872. It was on Madison's Main Street, but a tornado destroyed it on Sept. 28, 1881. The second Presbyterian Church was dedicated August 6, 1882 ([Images 65](#)), during the pastorate of Rev. W. J. Kimball, who served it for 17 years until August 31, 1896. In December of that year, Rev. W. J. Oliver came until the summer of 1897. It was Rev. Fredrick Tonge, however, who was credited with bringing the church into self support, because "prior to this, the church had regularly received funds from the Board of National Missions." Pastor Tonge served until late in 1898. Then Dr. G. L. Little and his wife came, but he was not installed as the pastor. In 1900, Rev. C. W. Lorrie arrived. Later, Rev. Theodore Morning was installed. In 1894, the church was rededicated and added a bell tower. Then in 1914, a new church was dedicated when Dr. J. E. Farmer was pastor (66).

St. Leonard's Catholic Church

When Madison County was organized in 1868, few Catholics lived in the area. John Dieter's home became the location for the first Mass said by Rev. J. P. Bedard. Then Patrick O'Shea and Thomas Lindner offered their homes for Masses conducted by either Rev. Fred Uhing or Rev. Anselm Peutz twice yearly.

By 1879, the railroad had brought in more settlers, and a church was needed. So a meeting was held at William Abts house over in Stanton County. Among those present were Rev. Cyprian Bansheid, "Michael Adelman, Anton Ganser, Joseph Lindner Sr, Thomas Lindner, George Malin Sr., Patrick O'Shea, John Reisinger and Joseph Rief Sr." By November of 1881, the church was built-its measurements were 40' x 30', and it could hold 100 people. But it was on a hill out of town. In 1898, the parishioners split the building in two and hauled the two sections into Madison where they also enlarged it (68). A cemetery was purchased in 1882. In 1989, St. Leonard's was listed on the National Registry of historic places (69).

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Originally known as the Evangelisch Lutherische Immanuels Gemeinde, it was organized in 1901. Pastor G. F. F. Mueller served until Ernest Pfeifer was called later in the year. There were 47 charter members, 24 men and 23 wives, along with their 73 children. "Dick Boe, Gotthelf Polenske, Paul Renner, Jacob Long, Charles Gross, Charles Mavis, Fran Schmidt, Jens Jacobson, Carl Polenske, August Buettner, Fritz Buettner, Frank Buettner, Paul Fischer, Claus Schmidt,

August Peterson, August Wendt, Peter Juergensen, Juergen Leu, Gustav Klitzke, Henry Juergensen, Wilhelm Buettner, Gottlieb Buettner, Jens Jensen and Thomas Peterson" were among those first members (64).

The congregation held services in homes until they could purchase a building at 403 South Main Street (63) from the First Baptist Church in 1902. A bell tower and sacristy were added later. Then in 1909 a parsonage at 407 West 5th Street was bought from "Wilhelmina Hickstein but sold when the church became part of a dual parish and the pastor resided in another town." In 1977, the church again had a full time pastor (64).

The church joined the Midwest Lutheran Synod; and in 1954, several synod mergers began, and its name is now The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (64). An organist for the church, Martha Zessin, the daughter of Pastor Fricke, played for services for 50 years, retiring in 1958 (65).

Trinity Lutheran Church

Trinity Lutheran Church originally met in the home of D. I. Nimmert. "The first Communion Service of record for Trinity Lutheran "was held on the fourth Sunday of Advent, 1882, three years before the congregation was organized." Formal organization was 8 November 1885 under Pastor Hoffman with about 17 charter members. The first church was dedicated before 7 September 1887 (70).

A second church, dedicated November 7, 1909, had sermons given in both English and German from 1918 up until the 1940s (70).

Trinity Methodist

In spite of the fact that a church had not yet been built, the Methodists of Madison had a parsonage for Rev. Charles Wesley Wells ca. 1875. The members met in another denomination's church for awhile (70), but on December 9, 1877, they laid the cornerstone for their new church. A second church was built in 1891. It was the one destroyed by fire in 1949 (71).

Source: Q-125 Book Committee. Images of Yesterday . . . Visions of Tomorrow: 1867-1992. Madison, Nebraska. (1993).