



HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

7 TH SUPPLEMENTAL NEWSLETTER
MAY, 2022

"from past generations to future generations"

SECTION 4

PILOT TOWNSHIP KANKAKEE COUNTY, IL

Portion of the 1883 Pilot Township plat map.



LOCATION

Section 4 is located along Rte. 17 to the north, W1000S on the south, S11000W on the east, and S12000W on the west.
Township 30N, Range 10E and 3rd Meridian

In the 5th Supplemental Newsletter of February 2022, we discussed Section 1 of Pilot Township. We are going to skip a few sections and move on to the west to talk about Section 4. Sections 4 and 5 are rich with history and deserve two separate newsletters.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

Between 1852 and 1857 many German Lutherans settled in the township of Pilot, IL. They met together for worship services at private homes. In early 1859, they formed a congregation of approximately 20 members. Alexander Betz donated land which was to be used for a church building and a cemetery. The first church cornerstone was laid June 27, 1861 and measured 20' x 34' and cost \$700. The first parsonage was build in 1864 and the second one built in 1877 due to the need for additional space. In 1900, Zion became a member of the Missouri Synod.

The present church cornerstone was laid in November of 1881. The church was 32' x 68' with a 75' tower. The cost of the building was \$3,000. The tower can still be seen for many miles. A day school, which could seat 60 students, was also built at this time. The first organ was acquired sometime in the late 1880's as well as the bell for the tower. A 700 lb. bell was ordered from St. Louis. The bell is still in the tower today and has been rung Sunday after Sunday since the church was built. In 1902, a new day school was built and a new school bell was purchased. The school is gone, but the bell remains on the church grounds. In 1924, the church was raised and an electric lighting plant was installed. A new altar and pulpit were also added at this time. In the summer of 1925, the barn, light plant, and several other buildings were destroyed by fire. The cost of remodeling the church and replacing what was destroyed totaled \$16,500.

In 1909, Zion marked its 50th anniversary. 1909 was also the year that Trinity of Herscher was organized. Many of the younger members left Zion and joined Trinity mainly because the services at Zion were only in German, not English. The first English service at Zion was not until 1918 by a guest minister. In 1923, English services were inaugurated every Sunday in addition to the German services. Beginning in 1935, German services were help every other Sunday a month and later eliminated all together. Until 1924, Sunday School Classes were only for those taking Confirmation. This changed in 1924 when classes were formed for all

ages. The Walter League also began in 1924. The Ladies Aid was organized in 1925 and the L.W.M.L. (Lutheran Women's Ministries league) was formed in 1944.

A small Wangerin organ was purchased in 1938 for about \$1700. This organs was paid for in part by contributions started in 1935 when an organ fund began. Later, and additional rank and a set of chimes were added.

In 1954, washrooms were installed in the church basement. During Zion's Centennial Celebration in 1959, extensive renovations were made to the church. These renovations include new pew, lighting fixtures, new altar and pulpit, carpeting, and much more. At that time, a chronological history of Zion was compiled and included pictures of both past and present. The parsonage needed to be replaced, and in 1964 a new brick home was built in place of the older building.

In May of 1975, the church members decided that more remodeling needed to be done in accordance with bringing the church up to date. The coal furnace was replaced with two electric furnaces and air conditioning. An 18' x32' addition to the front was built, and the walls were insulated and paneling was added.

In preparation for a the 125th anniversary in November, a special clean-up and repair project was conducted. Along with the Clean-up, a special service was planned with Dr. Oswald Hoffman as the special guest speaker, A dinner followed the service at Herscher High School.

October of 1992 brought the renovation of the parsonage and the church office. The pastor at that time, Pastor John Kiefer, moved his office from the parsonage to the church where he made an office behind the altar.

In September 1993, renovation was done to the inside of the church. This renovation included painting the church and chancel, refinishing that statue of Christ that is located on the right side of the church, and also the addition of a new Religious symbol above the altar.

September 1994 brought about the 135th anniversary of Zion. After the worship service commemorating the anniversary, the congregation gathered in fellowship and held a potluck.

ZION LUTHERAN CEMETERY

In February 1865, a parcel of land, one acre more or less, was purchased from Jacob and Charlotte Betz for \$20. On this land a church and parsonage had been build and a cemetery laid out.

- First funeral – Jobst Boehning on 9/27/1860.
Jobst Boehning does not show up on the County's Burial List of 1860 County census.
Where did Jobst go?
- Rev. George Bernthal was first minister 1860-1862.

- Mrs. Bernthal died of a rattlesnake bite (yes, that is what it says) in 1861. She was buried in the cemetery. But there is no stone.
- Anne L. Bernthal, daughter of George, also died the same day that his wife died. That certainly had to be a very sorry day. Her stone is in Row 14 the last stone to the south. In the County's Burial List, there is an Anne L. Bernthal that died in 1861. That must be her. You would have to think that her mother is buried next to her.
- Oldest head stone: Maria A. Reinhard, wife of Jacob. Age 33.
- Civil War Veterans
Joseph Nehls, Co. I, 76th IL. Infantry
John Herscher, Co. F, 156th IL Infantry
- John Herrscher (Herscher's) buried at Zion. That's a lot of John's!!!
John Herrscher b2/8/1867 d4/7/1887
John P. Herrscher b10/13/1870 d9/14/1881
John Herscher b5/24/1842 d5/7/1885
John Herscher b1869 d1903

PIPER SCHOOL

The Piper School is located in the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ section and is along what is now Rte. 17 on the land of Alexander Betz.

I cannot find anywhere when this school or any other of the Pilot Township one room schools were built. But school organization started before Pilot Township became a township in 1857. The Township meeting of 4/6/1858 was held at a school in District 2. Piper School??

ST. PETER & PAUL CEMETERY

I have included the St. Peter & Paul Cemetery with Section 4. The church was located across the Herscher blacktop and was in Section 5. I will include it in Section 5 at a later date.

From the Pilot Township Cemetery Book, page 131

The ground (one acre) of St. Peter & Paul's Cemetery was donated by Peter Geiger about 1869. The first one buried in the cemetery as a child, Mary Studer, died August 1869, daughter of Francis and Mary Studer. The first adult buried was Michael Clodi in 1870. A Cemetery Cross was donated by Michael Freuh in 1902 with the following inscription (translated)

"O, all ye that pass by the way attend and see, if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow: 4 Lamentations 1:12

May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

This hallowed plot of ground contains an interesting history. The pioneer settlers are gone, their plans, their schemes, their hopes, their cares, their reverses and their success are forgotten, but not their good deeds. These noble deeds should always be an inspiring

example to our modern, pampered generation. All honor to their memory, may their souls rest in peace.

- Michael Ruder was transferred from the Old Lehigh cemetery. He passed away in 1865.
- Contrary to what it says above, the KVGs book p132 says that Mary Jarvals was the first to be buried.
- Civil War veteran – Michael Clodi.
- Even though he donated the ground for the cemetery, Peter Geiger could not be buried in this cemetery for religious reasons (sadly, he had taken his own life)

PETER GEIGER

Peter Geiger (1819-1894) was born in Bavaria. He came to America in 1849 and settled in Pilot Township in 1876. He married Apolonia Emling (1822-1878) and they had seven children including Amelia and Martin.

Peter was a farmer and ended up owning 120 acres. His homestead was in the southwest corner of Section 4 and the barn is still standing. Not only was he a successful farmer but was also a religious man. Catholic services were held occasionally at Peter's house. Peter was one of the three Sunday School teachers in the Parish.

In 1868, Peter donated one acre where the church was built (in Section 5). That church opened in 1869. He also donated another acre of land for the SS Peter & Paul cemetery.

In 1878, Apolonia died and was buried in the St. Peter & Paul Cemetery. Peter continued farming until 1887 at which time he retired and moved to his son's Martin's house south of Herscher. Peter was supposedly lonely and took his own life in 1895.

Since he had taken his own life, he was not allowed to be buried next to his wife on the land he had donated. He was buried in the Pilot Center Cemetery. Peter's grave marker was not set until 2004 by Bret Geiger. What a sad story.

SECTION 4 LAND TRACT SALES

This list shows the men who were the first to purchase ground in Section 4 from the government or the Railroad. Taken from the Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales Database.

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ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES

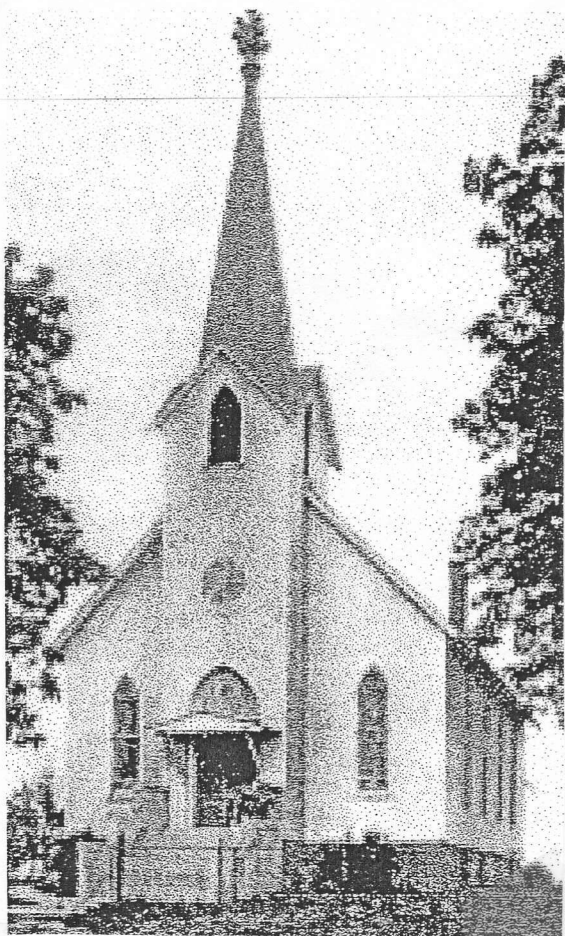
Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales Database

Search Criteria: **Section No: 04**

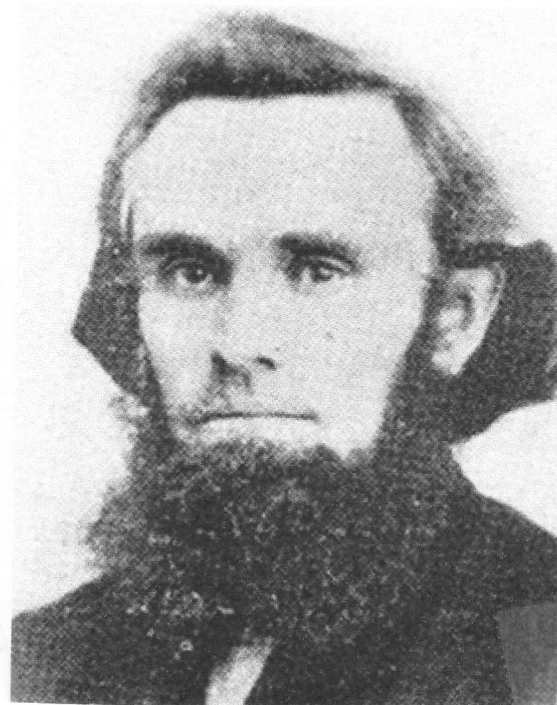
Name of Purchaser	Legal Description	Section	Township	Range	Meridian	Date Purchased	County
BALZ JACOB	N2NW	04	30N	10E	3	07/22/1864	KANKAKEE
BETTS GEORGE	NWSE	04	30N	10E	3	05/30/1868	KANKAKEE
BETZ ALEXANDER	W2NE	04	30N	10E	3	11/23/1863	KANKAKEE
BETZ GEORGE	NESE	04	30N	10E	3	11/20/1867	KANKAKEE
GEIGER PETER	S2SW	04	30N	10E	3	11/20/1867	KANKAKEE
HASHER ANDREW	SENW	04	30N	10E	3	06/22/1864	KANKAKEE
HERCHER ANDREW	NWSW	04	30N	10E	3	06/26/1865	KANKAKEE
HERCHER JOHN	NESW	04	30N	10E	3	02/01/1868	KANKAKEE
HOFFERT JACOB	SWNW	04	30N	10E	3	11/30/1868	KANKAKEE
LEHNAS CHARLES	SENE	04	30N	10E	3	07/03/1867	KANKAKEE
OBRECT JACOB	NENE	04	30N	10E	3	11/08/1866	KANKAKEE
SCHMIDT PETER	S2SE	04	30N	10E	3	08/31/1869	KANKAKEE

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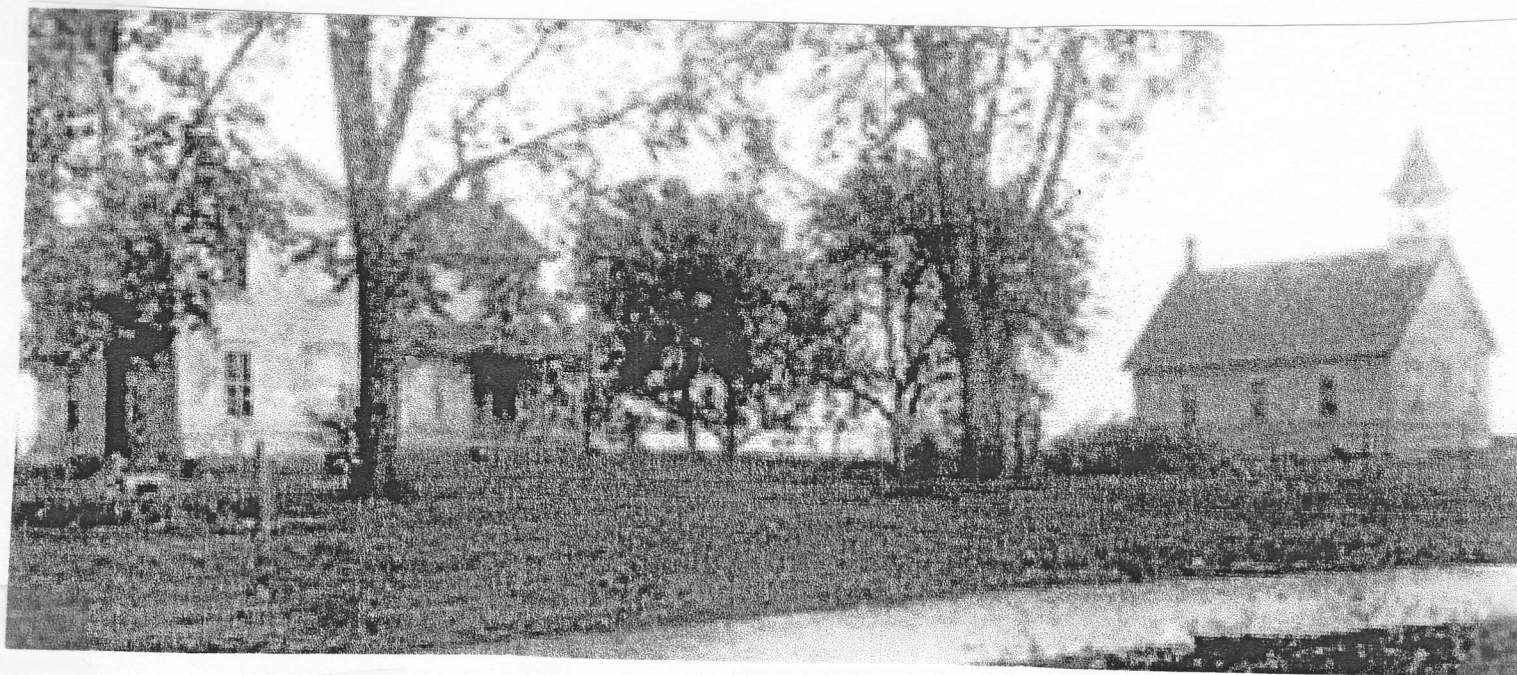
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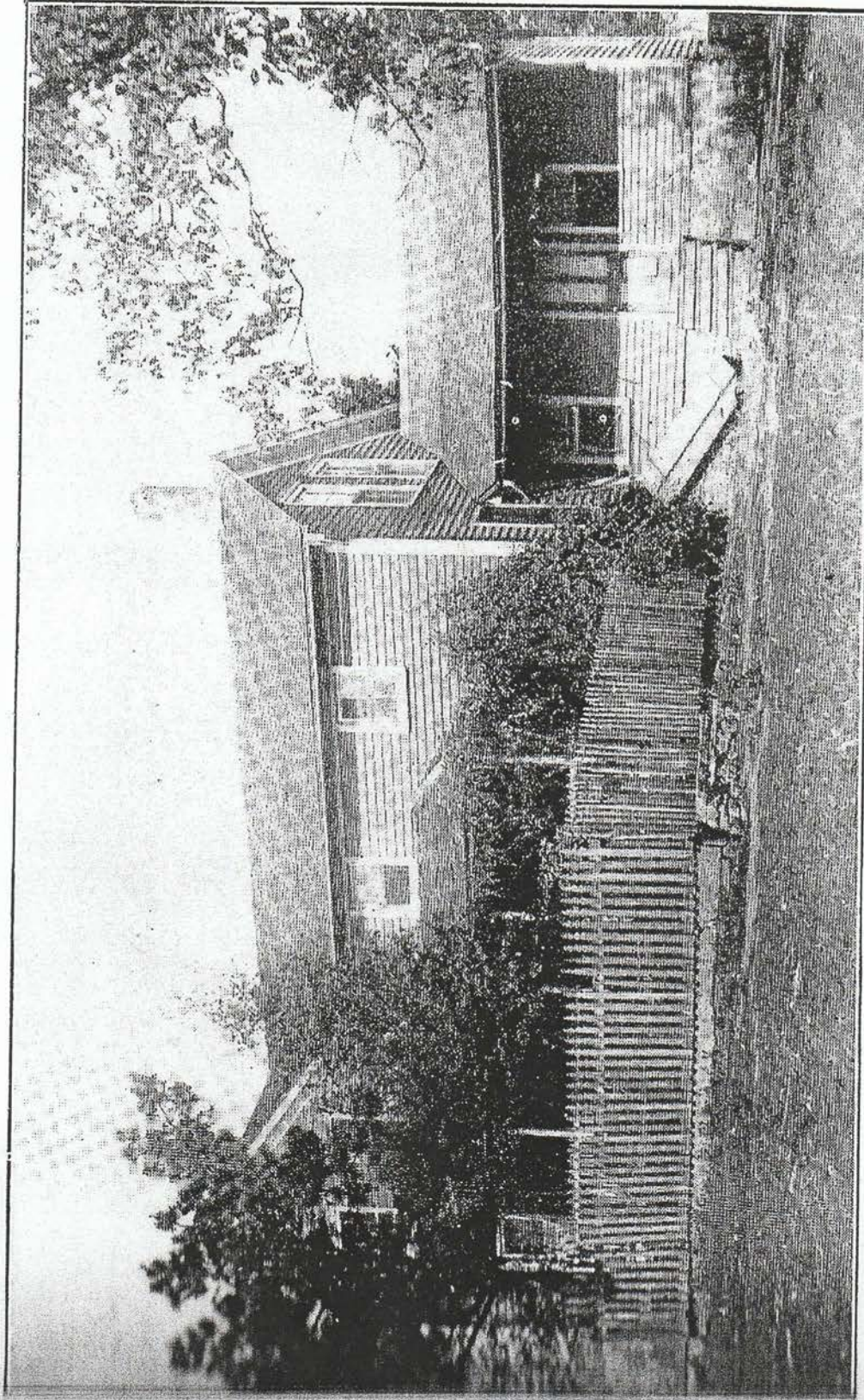
Early picture of Zion Lutheran Church



Zion's first minister Rev. George Barnthal



Early picture of Zion Lutheran Parsonage and School



HOMESTEAD OF PETER GEIGER. PILOT TOWNSHIP SECTION 4. ON
SEPTEMBER 24, 1867 THE FIRST MEETING WAS HELD IN THE SMALL
FRONT PART BY THE THEN FEW GERMAN CATHOLIC TO ORGANIZE A
CHURCH BUILDING SOCIETY (KIRCHENBAU-VEREIN).

