



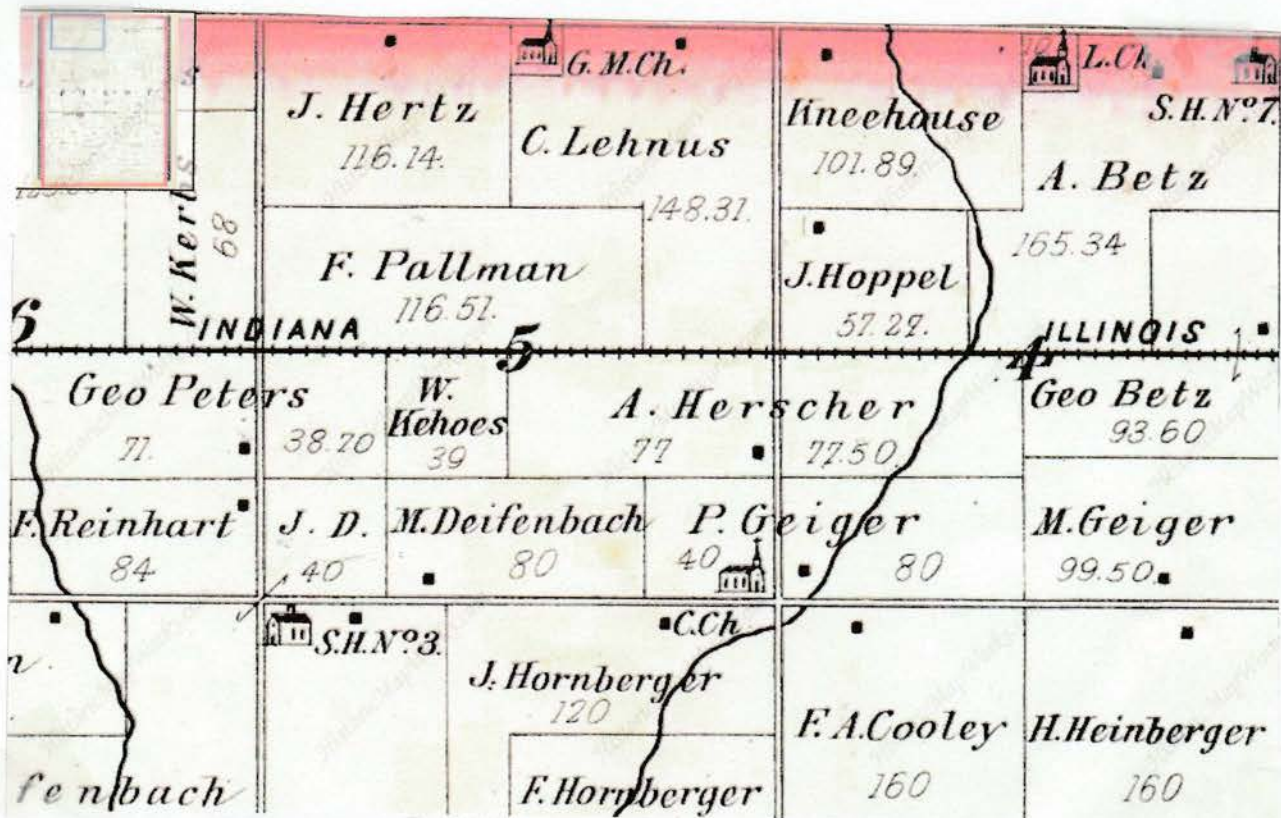
HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

9TH SUPPLEMENTAL NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2022

"from past generations to future generations"

SECTION 5 PILOT TOWNSHIP KANKAKEE COUNTY



(From the 1883 Kankakee County Atlas)

Section 5 is located along Rte. 17 to the north, W1000S on the south. S12000W on the east, and S13000W on the west.

Township 30N, Range 10E, and 3rd Principal Meridian

Index

Grand Prairie Cemetery.....	Page 1
Grand Prairie United Methodist Church.....	Page 2
SS Peter & Paul Church.....	Page 3
SS Peter & Paul School.....	Page 4
Illinois Public Domain Land Track Sales Database.....	Page 5
Pictures	
SS Peter & Paul Church and School.....	Page 6
SS Peter & Paul children, teacher, pastor 1913.....	Page 7
SS Peter & Paul school and parsonage.....	Page 8
SS Peter & Paul children.....	Page 8

GRAND PRAIRIE CEMETERY

On the 14th day of August, 1868, Mr. Joseph Pelger donated one-half acre for the Grand Prairie Church and two acres around the church for a burial place. Mr. Henry Unz passed away and was buried in the cornfield before the cemetery was ready. They had to work to raise money to start to get the cemetery ready and the upkeep of the cemetery. Then lots were sold to families.

A meeting was planned on Sept. 27, 1924, for the lot owners to organize and have directors to keep up the cemetery. The directors met with Lawyer John Becker to explain the difference of a cemetery under church supervision or under church rules

The directors met and made up the bylaws for the cemetery. There were five directors chosen; one for president, one for vice president, one for secretary-treasurer and two for directors. In 1945, the cemetery association bought one acre from the Lehnus farm.

Civil War Veterans buried at Grand Prairie:

- Charles Lehnus (1833-1911). Charles was in the battle of Gettysburg. Served under U.S. Grant. Saw President Lincoln several times.
- George Michael Wagner (1842-1923). On Jan. 28, 1864, shortly after his 21st birthday, Mike Wagner enlisted. He was sent as a replacement to the 76th IL. Infantry, a regiment that had been formed in Kankakee in the summer of 1862 and by then had seen hard service at the siege of Vicksburg and other campaigns along the lower Mississippi. With the young Wagner now in the ranks, the 76th continued to see action, including a sharp battle at Jackson, Mississippi in July 1864 and in the closing days of the war, April 1865, the campaign to take Mobile. In June 1865 the 76th disbanded and most of the men discharged, but Wagner, being a late enlistee, was transferred to the 37th Illinois, in which he continued occupation duty at various places in Texas until his discharge in April 1866. (As told by Laurin L. Henry in 2015)

- William Dittus (1840-1926) William Dittus enlisted in Co. H of the 42nd IL Infantry on August 23, 1861. His last battle was Resaca, Georgia, where he was wounded in the right knee with a .58 caliber mini-ball. The doctors wanted to amputate his right leg below the wound but he refused and carried the mini-ball around in his leg walking with a limp until his death. Fred Wepprecht remembered watching William's daily routine of cleaning of the wound and then putting some kind of salve on it and covering it with brown paper as that the wound never fully healed.
- August Seeger - 76th IL Infantry. Operations against Vicksburg, Meridian Campaign, and Ft. Blakely.

A Sad Story

The story of Chris Gregorson (from Jim Ridings Wild Kankakee). Chris was working at the church on July 20, 1943, replacing drainage tile. While digging, dirt fell back in the ditch burying him six feet under. George Marth of Union Hill arrived at the church the next morning to mow the lawn. He heard groans but saw nothing. He drove to William Wepprechts' garage and summoned Dr. Wisner. Marth, Wepprecht, and Wisner dug the man out. The 68 year old Gregorson opened his eyes, asked for water, and died. Is that a story or what.

GRAND PRAIRIE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

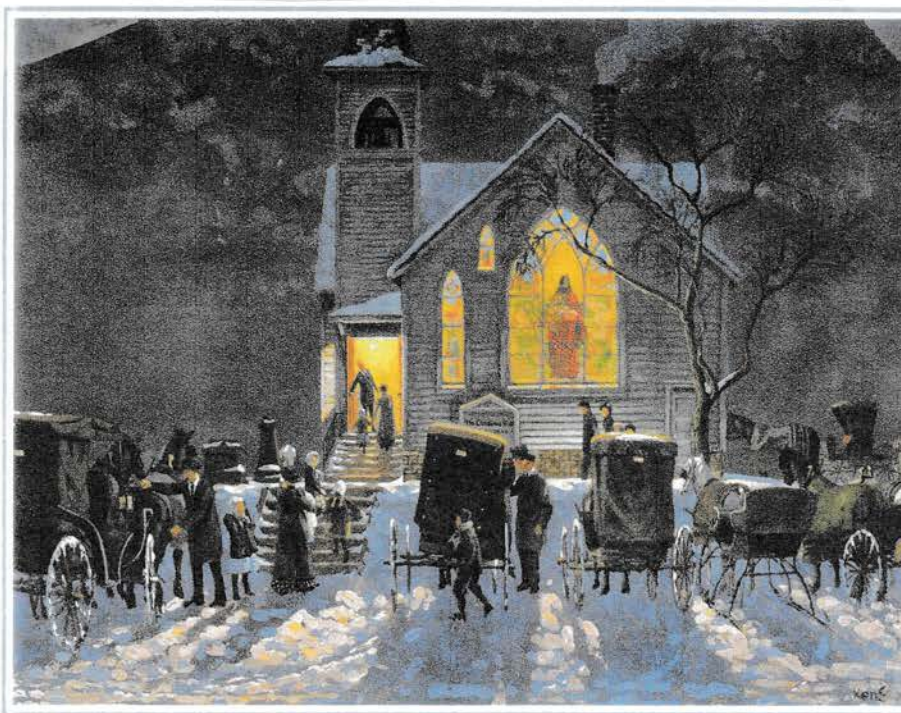
Grand Prairie United Methodist Church had its earliest beginnings from a Kankakee Evangelical mission circuit started in 1854. The Grand Prairie circuit was formed in 1858. Between 1865-1867 a church was organized and met in homes. In 1868, the Zion Society of the Evangelical Association purchased two acres from Jacob Bossert for \$100. The church was 32 x 48 with a tower. Cost of the church was \$2,500. Repairs were made after lightning damage in 1878. German was spoken and men and women sat on separate sides until the early 1900's.

The first church was replaced with a larger and more accommodating building in 1910; cost of building and equipment was \$8,325. It is believed that the church's name was then changed to Grand Prairie. The cover of the program for the 1910 dedication lists the name of the church as Grand Prairie Church of the Evangelical Association. The building was remodeled and enlarged in 1949. Additional floors were laid and an 18 x 50 foot addition was added to the south making available a kitchen, rest rooms, classrooms, and an organ tone chamber. Total cost of the project was \$45,482.37. A Mother's Room was added to upper rear of the sanctuary. A six step Schantz pipe organ with Deagan chimes was installed and still plays beautiful today.

There was a centennial celebration in 1968 with the theme, "God's Light on the Prairie.

In 1983, light wood paneling went on the walls, hardwood floors were refinished and new carpeting went in aisles and pulpit. Everyone is inspired by the magnificent stained glass windows, which were refurbished in 2005.

Currently, the Grand Prairie United Methodist Church and Bonfield Evangelical United Methodist Church are a two church parish with one minister serving both churches. 2



From "Growing Seasons" by Elsie Lee Splear, illustrated by Ken Stark

SS PETER & PAUL CHURCH

Located in the southeast corner of Section 5 across from the Peter Geiger homestead.

From Parish History 1919

On November 25, 1867 the German Catholics held a meeting at Peter Geiger's place of the purpose of organizing a Church Building Society. Officers: President, Carl Ruder, Vice President, Matthias Clodi, Secretary, Philip Karcher, Treasurer, Peter Geiger. Committee on Financial Reports: Fridolin Ruder and Ed Finger. Society dues: 50 cents. At this meeting it was decided to supply to the Prior of the Benedictin Convent in Chicago for a priest who would say Mass on the 13th or 14th of the following January at Philip Karcher's place. The entrance and monthly fees collected amounted to \$19.00.

January 8, 1868 the following officers were elected: George Schosser, Erhard Ruder, Wendelin Ruder, Maurice Studer, Martin Geiger, Michael Clodi, Vincent Boner, and Chryst Knittel.

April 19, 1868 a Sunday School was organized. The first catechetical instruction was given in the home of Peter Geiger, who with George Peter, Frank Studer, and Nicolaus Weiler, was elected at first teachers.

June 21, 1868 a Building Committee was elected with the following officers: Philip Karcher, Fridolin Ruder and Frank Studer.

September 20, 1868, it was decided to erect a church 24' x 46' x 14' and on January 3, 1869 a motion was carried (17 votes against 2) that a Church be built on Peter Geiger's land. The building was erected by John and Lambert Paulissen of Kankakee and dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul on October 4, 1869. The Church was blessed by father Kuchenbuch of Chebanse to the great rejoicing of the small congregation. In this humble house of worship, the members moved by deep faith and religious sentiments, gathered on "priestless" Sundays whenever a missionary priest could not come, sometimes for one, two, or three months to recite the rosary and other prayers, because they loved their God and their Church, built at the cost of so many sacrifices. Sometimes they attended divine service in the old Church of the French-Irish congregation at Lehigh and also when it had moved two and one half miles south.

They well remembered the word written in St. Matthew 21:13: "My house shall be called a house of prayer."

Church Statistics

- First Baptism: Mary Magdalen born 7/24/1869, legitimate daughter of Edward Finger and Rosa Scheiding.
- First Marriage: Chrysostom Knittel (widower of Elizabeth Heimbürger) age 47, son of Peter Knittel and Catherine Buehrla, and Rosa Peter, age 19, daughter of George Peter and Mary Nau.
- First burial in SS Peter & Paul's Cemetery: Mary Studer, daughter of Francis and May Josepha Studer, died 1869, age 5 months, 10 days.

SCHOOL

The high importance of a school was well understood by the early pioneers. In 1884, a small school building was erected by Father H. Mehring and formally opened in January 1885.

The first and subsequent settlers deserve great praise and credit for sending their children to school from a great distance (5 miles). Often they had to walk. The average number of pupils attending the school was about 20-25.

The church and school were torn down after the completion of St. Margaret Mary's Church in 1922.

by Bob Voss

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ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES

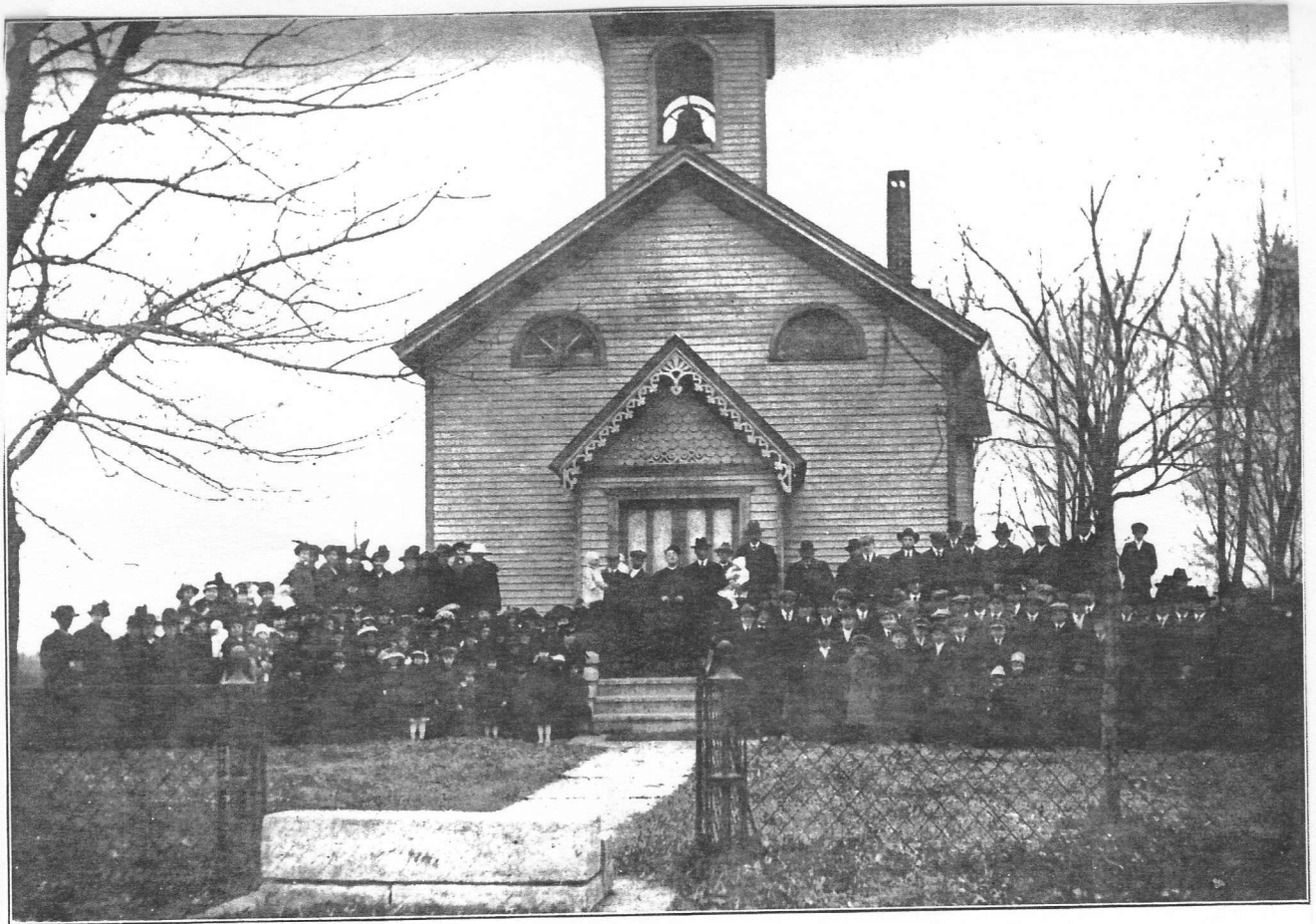
Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales Database

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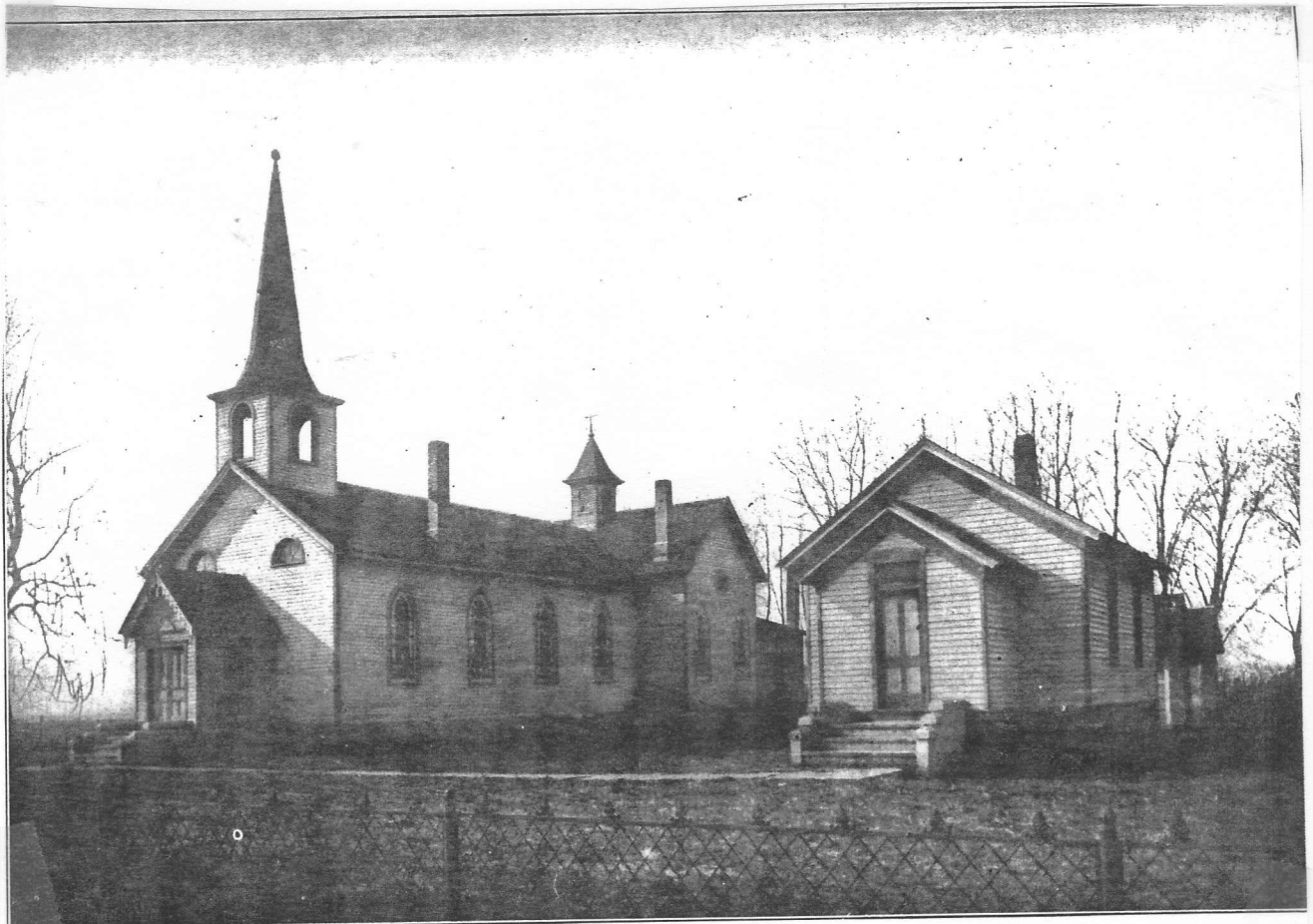
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HERTZ JEREMIAH	LOT1NW	05	30N	10E	3	11/20/1855	KANKAKEE
HERTZ JEREMIAH	E2LOT2NW	05	30N	10E	3	11/20/1855	KANKAKEE
HITT ISAAC	W2LOT1NE	05	30N	10E	3	06/05/1858	KANKAKEE
HITT ISAAC R	W2LOT1NE	05	30N	10E	3	06/05/1858	KANKAKEE
OSBRONG MATTHIAS	LOT2NE	05	30N	10E	3	10/06/1854	KANKAKEE
WATSON ANDREW	N2SE	05	30N	10E	3	01/13/1855	KANKAKEE
WATSON ANDREW	SWSE	05	30N	10E	3	01/13/1855	KANKAKEE

[Return to
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PAGE 5



PARISHIONERS OF SS. PETER AND PAUL'S CHURCH



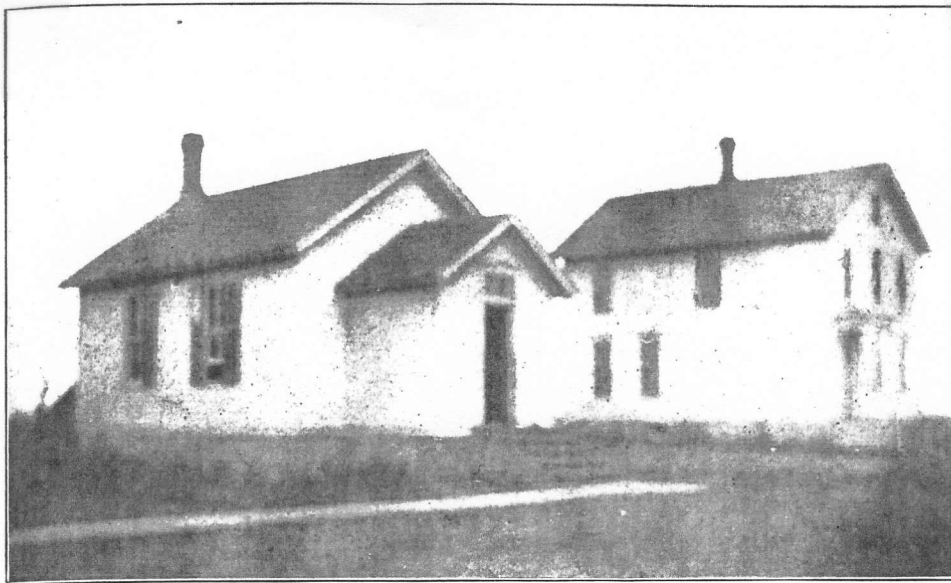
SS. PETER AND PAUL'S CHURCH AND SCHOOL, PILOT.



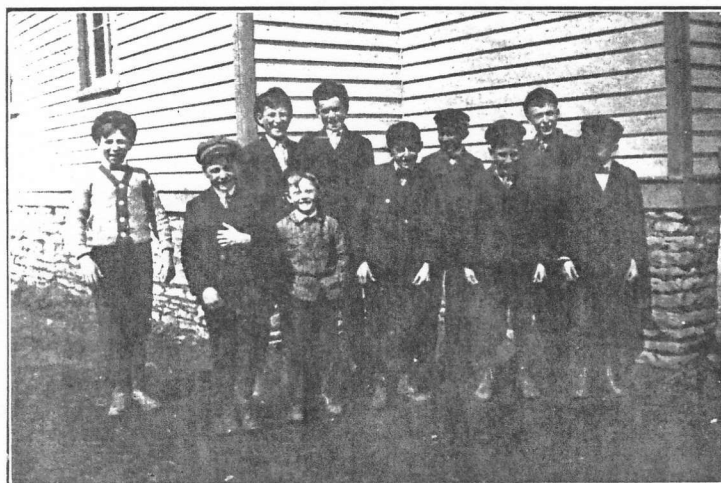
SS. PETER AND PAUL'S SCHOOL CHILDREN, TEACHER AND PASTOR.



The Lehnus homestead, at Route 17 and Herscher Road. The left part of the house was the parsonage of SS Peter & Paul, moved from the nearby church. While moving, the house became stuck on the railroad track and they almost didn't get it off in time before the next train came. The parsonage was built in 1884 and added to the house in 1907. The house has fallen into disrepair today.



SS. PETER AND PAUL'S SCHOOL WITH FORMER PARSONAGE.



SS. PETER AND PAUL'S SCHOOL CHILDREN.