

High Church is Home To Dead of Every American War

by Marti Ingersoll

A little log church in the wildwood high upon a hill where Medina, Summit and Wayne counties meet at Silvercreek, was the Emanuel United Church's humble beginning in 1817. The present cemetery protects the final resting place of soldiers from every war and includes the Waltz brothers whose property it once was. Gravemarkings speak softly of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican War, Civil War, Spanish-American War and World Wars I and II.

Peter Waltz, his brother John, and his mother and father started out in 1814 in a company of thirteen pioneers leaving Ellsworth (now Mahoning County in Ohio) to come west. With only two wagons of provisions, they traveled about 6 miles a day. Delayed by many mishaps it took them nearly a week to work their way west and southward arriving at the property that in time became known as the old Waltz place. Bears were quite numerous and annoying and they spent much of their time defending their families, pigs and dogs. In those days it would easily take 8 days to go to Cleveland and return. Peter Waltz died the 28th of May 1876 at the age of 76.

In spite of the many hardships a house of worship was not delayed. The oldest records available, (a tattered weathered leather ledger) echo in the picturesque quill and ink that early beginning from 1817-1871.

In the Church register, 1884-1936, the Rev. E. H. Otting, entered a German copy of an agreement of Lutheran and Reformed church members of Chippewa Township, Wayne county, Wadsworth Township and Medina County for a Union Congregation. Also the Constitution was adopted at the same time (Jan 1 of 1817). The English translations were made in Sept. of 1942 by Rev. J.H. Poetter, who served as minister for 25 years until 1953. Rev. Poetter's son Paul is currently elder in the church and his grandchildren Dave, Rick and Nancy are also still active.

As of January of 1976, this charming white colonial church has welcomed a new minister. Rev. Eddie A. Bray Jr.

and his lovely wife Karen with children Tami-4 and Adam-5 months. They reside in the modern parsonage adjacent to the present church building who's evolution spans 159 years.

Let's trace back together. The church was to be constructed (by Peter Waltz and Jacob Everhard as builders), on the Waltz property in Chippewa Township, Wayne County. In Feb. 1816 Daniel Wehr (Ware) had purchased 120 acres, (the southeast corner of Wadsworth Township, Medina County). On Feb. 19, 1817, he realized he wasn't long for this world and that there was no church burial grounds. So for a consideration of \$4.00 he conveyed to the inhabitants of this area, 80 square rods of ground, (the SE corner of his property) for the "sole exclusive purpose of burying ground, for that and no other purpose forever..."

Construction had started on the log church across the road in Chippewa Township on August 4 1817. The present cemetery adjacent to it was decided by Peter Waltz for "no other purpose" in 1822.

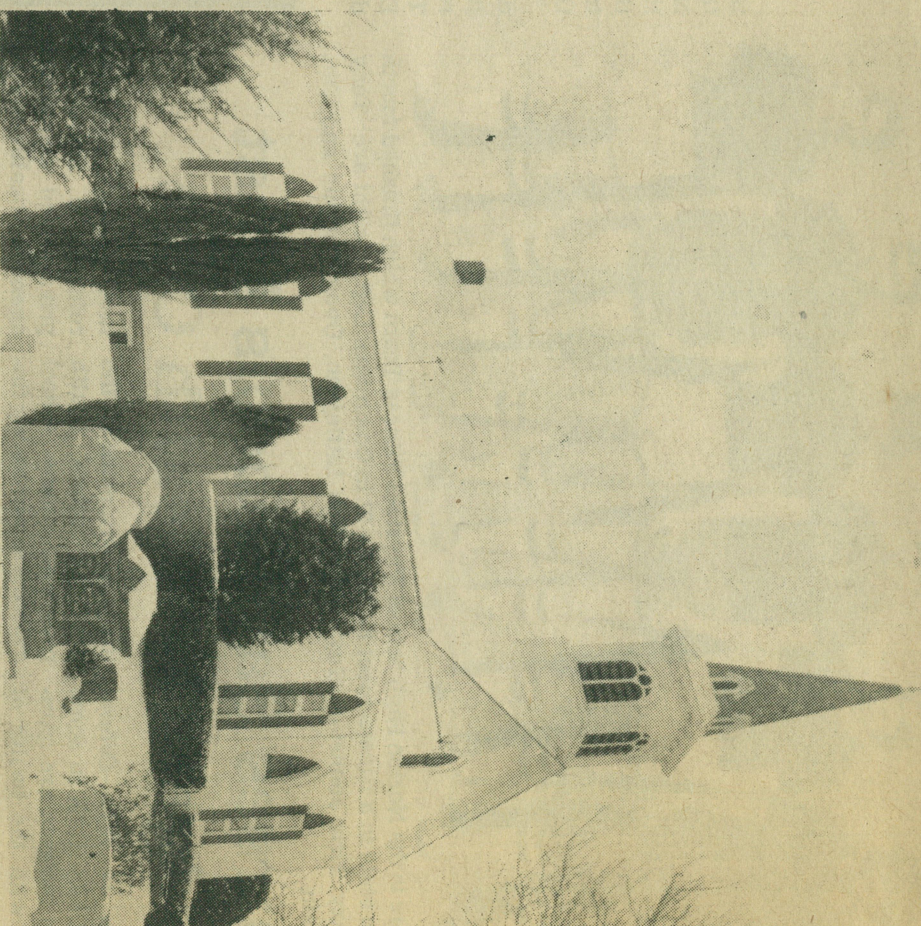
By Nov. 1838, the congregation outgrew their cabin and began construction on the corner of Norton Township, on land donated by William and Rebecca Brouse for \$5.00. This building was much larger than the old log building, it wore a "high" steeple.

The pulpit was on the north side, with a gallery around the other three sides and 3 doors. The seats were arranged on an inclined floor and with the gallery would accommodate 600 persons. There were no organ or choir in those days, not even hymnals, the minister would read the lines and the congregation then sang them...all in German.

In 1873 the present church building was erected. Since that time the interior has been changed a number of times and many improvements have been made. Future plans include many more.

One of the oldest members of this church was Mrs. Edith Harter Baughman who passed away Nov. 3 1970 at the age of 94. She was the great-granddaughter of Rev. G. Henry Weygandt, the first Lutheran pastor

More than 160 Memorial Days ago, the cemetery of Emanuel United Church was dedicated. It has provided a resting place for soldiers of every war, including the Revolu-



tionary. Sitting high on a hill, the Church is considered at its most beautiful in the dead of Winter, as seen in the Pride Staff Photograph above.

at High Church. For many years "Emanuel-God with us" was lettered inside the iron arch in front of the church. Two stoves furnished heat and her son, Harold Baughman, enjoyed the job of tending them even as a small child. (Harold has served officially for over 50 years as custodian). Harold can remember walking the many miles to church each week gathering kindling along the way.

There was a time when he had to shinny down a trapdoor, and wander through a dugout tunnel in order to reach the coal furnace that devoured all his offerings. The church was once lighted by coal oil lanterns and a chandelier could be raised and lowered from the center to be lighted or cleaned. Horses and buggies were pastured west of the church and only the minister had a 3 sided stall. It was the custom of each family to entertain the minister at least once each year.

Mrs. Ethel Miller Hummel is one of the seven daughters of Martin Luther Miller, and granddaughter of Jacob Strohl. Ethel enjoys being the member with the longest standing in the church. She was born and raised in the church and now at 78 years old she remembers vividly the long walks through the dust and mud that

brought them to frolic in the spring across the road from the church. She would carry her shoes and socks, also a lunch basket and plan to spend most of the day. Horses and buggies were for old folks or the sick, everyone else walked.

Emanuel Church is considered the oldest Protestant Church in the area and all other churches of these denominations were "children" of hers.

Eloise Hummel Busson is a fourth generation member and serves as pianist. The spinet piano is in memory of her Aunt, Mrs. Ruth Tritt (sister to Mrs. Hummel). Choir director is Esther Wagner and present Sunday School superintendent is Jerry Baughman, son of Harold. The youth choir is directed by Mrs. Jacquie (Jim) McMillen who also serves as president of the Amelia Poetter Women's Guild. They have a very active youth group advised by Mr. and Mrs. (Tom and Karen) Henderson and Mrs. Emma (John) Wells with Carol Miner serving as youth president.

Little touches of yesterday remain in tact..such as the gloriously polished wood - paneled ceiling in geometric squares...

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