

GERMAN UNION CEMETERY
THREE-GENERATION GENEALOGY
Created by Ronald R. Prinzing

RICE COUNTY FAMILIES – Their History, Our Heritage
A project of the Rice County Historical Society
1981

THE GERMAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The German Lutheran Church was built adjacent to the Henry and Margaret Siemers farmhouse on County Road 61. Half of the land on which the church was built was given to the Church Association by Henry Siemers and the other portion was given by his neighbor John Abel. This was the church attended by Henry Siemers and his family and it was serviced by various ministers from the area. One of the ministers was Rev. Henry Schulz of the Trinity Lutheran Church in Faribault. He would drive out by horse and buggy to conduct services in the church, as well as churches located in Webster and Morristown.

Sometime in the 1950's the church was sold, torn down, and the ground leveled. The land was reverted to Leonard Dalby, the present owner of the former Henry Siemers' farm, and also his neighbor who owned the other portion of the land.

THE GERMAN UNION CEMETERY

The German Union Cemetery is located on County Road 61, just a short distance from the former farmhouse of Henry Siemers and is located on the boundary of the Henry Siemers and John Evert property. The date of the cemetery is November 1891, which was the month and year that Margaret Siemers' mother died. She was interred in this cemetery in an unmarked grave. It is believed that her burial was the first in the cemetery and was perhaps the reason for starting the German Union Cemetery on the Siemers' property. The deed shows that Henry Siemers deeded the land in 1893 to the Cemetery Association. The country cemetery was re-activated in 1968 and is well kept.

**These histories are written in the book mentioned above. There were burials in the cemetery prior to 1891, as stones show—the Abel children, three in 1880, after a diphtheria epidemic, one in 1885, with spinabifida...and those other families.

Family memories of Irene Beyer Christensen who grew up next to the church and attended District #61 school and the church are as follows: Irene's mother was Emma Abel Beyer, daughter of John Abel and wife of Charles Beyer, who also owned adjoining land. (Written September 1999 – Irene is 92 years old.)

The church:

Attended by Beyers, Abels, Siemers, Fischers and others. The church was used as a farm building prior to being torn down. When torn down, the lumber was taken by area farmers and used for their buildings.

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The cemetery:

Irene remembers an older cemetery several miles to the southeast in some woods, possibly on a Demann or Hirdler farm. Farmers who purchased the land plowed up the cemetery and one stone was brought to the current cemetery. Irene thought the stone belonged to a Demann family member.

Grace Ludwig Day has given this information:

The church:

The church was called St. Johns. It was shared, possibly on alternate Sundays by the German Lutherans and the American Sunday School Union. A Mr. Art M. Hamann led the Sunday school meetings and also a Rev. Staph who came by horse and buggy. At one time, Grace and her sister Irene Ludwig Younkers taught Sunday school.

The cemetery:

The older cemetery was plowed up by Albert Smisek. The stones were put under his granary. One stone was recovered, that of August Demann, which was moved to the German Union Cemetery. There also was a small family cemetery on the line of the school property (to the south) and the Meehl farm. Grace had been told that three small Meehl girls had been buried there in unmarked graves. Grace thought that the name of the German Union Cemetery might have come from the church also being used by the American Sunday School Union. The older cemetery was on the August Demann farm southeast of the current cemetery, then owned later by Smisek. There were two hills along the road and the cemetery was on top of one of them.

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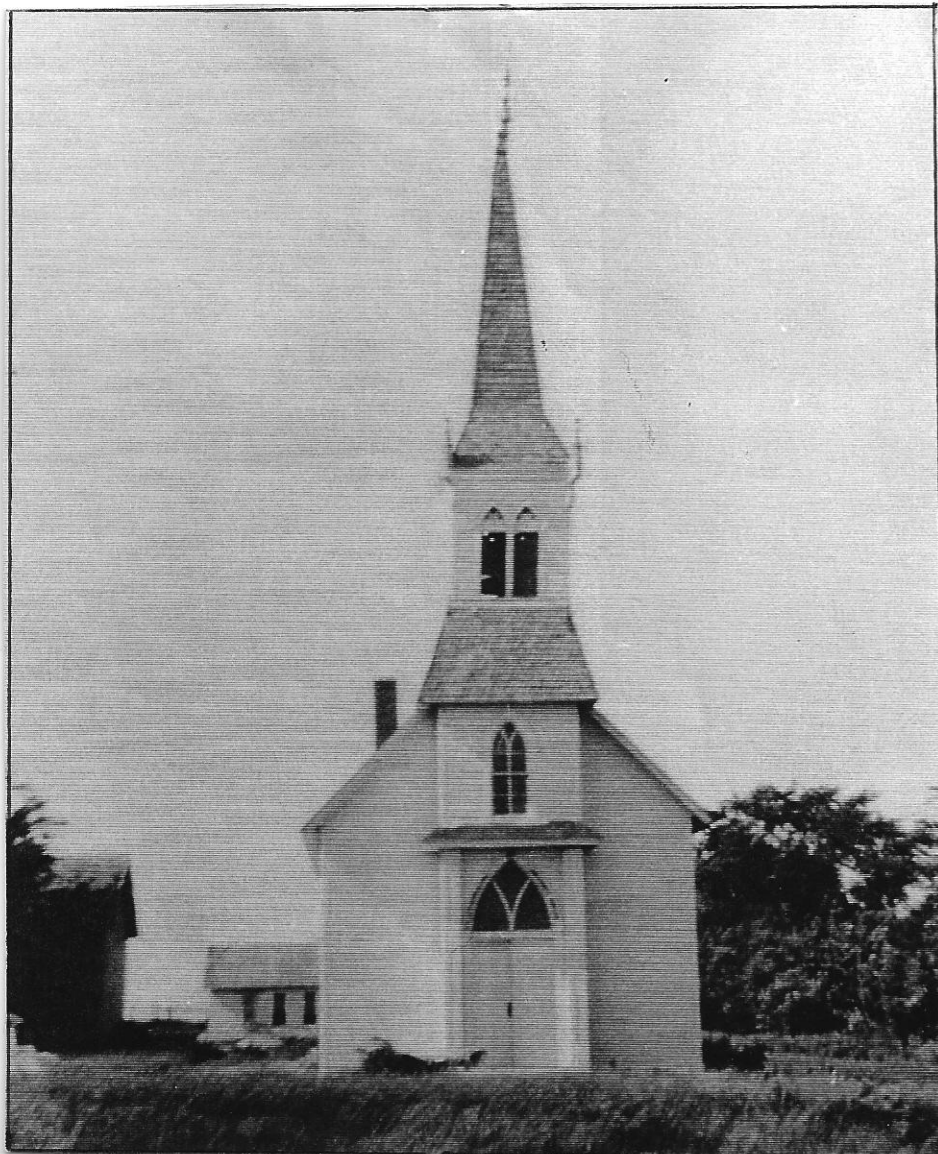
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Forest Township

Forest Township is located in the northwestern part of Rice County. The land did have some natural meadows and rolling hills, however, much of the township was dense hardwood timber. There are many lakes within the township and was a favorite fishing spot of the Native Americans. It was said that the trees were so thick and tall one could not see the sky. The township was named for the wooded condition of most of the area. The thick forest impeded settlement, as the newcomers to the area would choose the prairie lands in the county first to farm. James Fitzsimmons first settled the township in 1854. Fitzsimmons then sold his claim in the following spring to George W. Miller. George W. Miller later plotted this land for the town of Millersburg in 1856. Millersburg was a sweetish settlement in the woods and some of the founding families included Peter Gustafson, John Johnson, Mathias Johnson, Niles Larson, Christian Lundstrom and Peter Younquist. The first Swedish immigrants to the county included 13 families. Some other early settlers were William Henderson and family in 1854 from Maine. Wild cranberries and was a cash crop for early settlers in the first years. Cranberries helped them get through the winters until a decent area of land could be cleared for farming other crops. John Olson and John Undberg built the Christdala Evangelical Swedish Lutheran Church in 1878 for \$230. The building is still in its original position on the north side of Circle Lake. The post office was established in 1871 with the name of **Lester**. The first town meeting was in 1858 and the supervisors were Elias Taylor, Zebulon Sargent and Charles Brand.

NOTE: The town of LESTER.

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ST. JOHN'S CHURCH IN FOREST TOWNSHIP

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LAURA DALBY AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH IN FOREST TOWNSHIP

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George W. Miller, (owner of the store) driver of buggy. Mr. & Mrs. C. O. Person in the back seat. George A. Miller (George's son) on porch with dog.

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Taken from book "History of Rice County" Pub. In 1882. MILLERSBURG VILLAGE This is the only village in the town of Forest, and in it at one time laid all the hopes and aspirations, in this line, of the entire country surrounding it; but this, like many other similar enterprises shattered the fond hopes and anticipations, after a brief struggle, and was laid on the shelf as a thing of yore. It started with fair prospects, advantages of a good location, etc., but the non-arrival of a hoped for railway, with its accompanying benefits, coupled with the opposition of larger and surrounding towns, finally used the struggling village up, and it was declared moribund. The first settlement on the village site commenced in 1855, when James Fitzimmons came and pre-empted 160 acres where the village is, and opened it as a farm. In the spring following he sold to George W. Miller, who also took some other land. Mr. Miller soon afterward platted the village and recorded it as Millersburg. He also put up a mill and a hotel. Next a store was started by Albert Fillmore just out of the village limits. He made up his mind to start an establishment, and went to the cranberry marsh on sections six and seven and gathered a load of berries. These he marketed, and with the proceeds thereof started the first store in Millersburg. He ran this store one year and a half, when the calamity of bankruptcy overtook him, and he went to Minneapolis, but has since died. The next store was started by Thomas Adams in the fall of 1858, who opened a building opposite the hotel and put in a stock of groceries and general merchandise. He succeeded in withstanding the pressure for about one year, when the fate of the former merchant overtook him and he removed to Dundas. In 1857, the first blacksmith shop was started by Mr. Sellon in the same building that was afterwards converted into Adams' store. It was operated as a "bellows and anvil" establishment for about one year, when Mr. Sellon retired. There have been a number of blacksmith shops started, and now there are three in operation: Elof Johnson's, James Strange's, and Mr. Anderson's. The latter son of Vulcan still retains the good old fashioned way of shoeing horses in which each man that wants a horse shod must hold its foot up while the manipulator drives the nails. Millersburg Hotel was originally started when the town was platted by the proprietor, George W. Miller, in 1857. MILLERSBURG POST-OFFICE---This Post-office was established in 1859, and was located in the village bearing the same name. Geo. W. Miller was the first appointed to handle the mail. He held the office for a number of years, and his son, George A. Miller, is the present Postmaster. MANUFACTURING---The only saw-mill ever operated in the town of Forest was started at Millersburg in 1856, by James Fitzimmons. It was run by steam with a fifteen horse-power engine, and was equipped with a perpendicular saw, the capacity being about 4,000 feet per day. The mill was run in this shape until 1862, when a circular saw was substituted for the perpendicular, and the mill became the property of George W. Miller. He ran the mill and placed one run of feed stones in it, continuing until 1875, when it was sold to Mr. Robbins, and in 1880 moved to Montgomery, Le Sueur county, where the latter gentleman still resides. He also owns most of the Millersburg village property. The village now contains the hotel, in which is kept the Postoffice, and the blacksmith shops. Through some illegality in recording the village plat, or some non-concurrence with some technical form, the lots and blocks of the village have reverted to, and for the last few years have been assessed as farm property.

MILLERSBURG STORE

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**GERMAN UNION CEMETERY MEETING AT THE GERMAN UNION CEMETERY
IN SUMMER OF 1990**

**LEFT TO RIGHT: Esther Prinzing (Mrs. George Prinzing), Irene Christensen, Esther Prinzing
(Mrs. Roland Prinzing) George Prinzing and William (Bill) Ross**

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GERMAN UNION CEMETERY SIGN WITH OLD FENCE

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GERMAN UNION CEMETERY SIGNS WITH NEW FENCE