

WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT FIRST IMMANUEL IN THE 1920S

Art Blank and Caroline Meinkow interviewed in 2010 at their ages of 94.

CHRISTMAS TREE by Art

There was this huge live Christmas tree. It rose from the floor of the church to about 6 feet from the ceiling. It took a day to put it up. Mr. Hacker, a carpenter, supervised the work of ten men.

The tree was purchased from Wisconsin through Concordia Cemetery. Ed Hacker built a large base for the tree in the shape of a cross. Then they slid the tree across the floor from the big doors to the front of the church.

Some men in the balcony pulled it up with a rope; while other men on the floor were pushing it. Then they set it on the base, and turned the tree so that the best side of the tree faced the congregation. The tree covered much of the chancel.

Then Ed Hacker bolted the base to the floor with a 2 inch bolt at the end of each arm of the cross. A strong steel pipe was placed next to the trunk of the tree all the way to the top to hold it in place.

At the top of the tree another pipe in the form of a circle was placed on which to hang the lights. There were 25 strings of lights with 12 electric lights made of ceramic on each string. They hung from the top to the bottom. A lighted star was placed at the top of the large center pipe.

A large lighted sign reading "Ehre Sei Gott in der Hohe" (Glory to God in the Highest) was hung on the wall next to the altar. Two large bolts were drilled into the wall. A man on a ladder pulled up the sign and then used the rope to hang it on the bolts.

CHRISTMAS EVE by Caroline Meinkow

The church was packed. It was the most important service of the year. It began at 6:00 p.m. People came early to get a seat. Some people had to stand. Each child had to recite a Bible verse or hymn verse, including the first grade. It was also the longest service of the year.

One year Gert Jorgensen and I recited the first verse of "Ach, liebes kind, freud heute so?" (O little child, why so much joy today?) Girls often bought new dresses. We had about 100 children at my time, many more in earlier years.

Each child got a sack of candy bought by Mr. Wischmeyer, a candy salesman for the Bunte Candy Company. Much of it was cheap fruit candy. We didn't like it very much.