



175th Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

JOHN CHAVERIAT’S MEMORIES OF FIRST SAINT PAUL’S: PART ONE

First Saint Paul’s was formed by immigrant families from Germany. The first pastor of First Saint Paul’s was Rev. August Selle (1846-1851). When the congregation split with many members leaving to form First St. Paul’s United Church of Christ, five families remained under Pastor Selle’s ministry. One family was the Brockschmidts, who founded the Brock Tool Company. Many fellow Lutherans got jobs at Brock Tool, including John Chaveriat’s brother, Charles, who drove a delivery car for Brock Tool in the summer while he was a ministerial student. Another ministerial student from First St. Paul’s who drove a delivery car for Brock was Bob Hess, whose father was chairman of the congregation. Later, when John was a young lawyer, he probated the estate of Mrs. Johanna Brockschmidt, who is buried in Wunder’s Cemetery.

John’s grandparents originally went to church at St. Paul’s United Church of Christ on Orchard and Kemper. But during World War I, John’s paternal grandmother, Lena, was informed that federal agents were listening to what was being preached there. When she heard this, she exclaimed: “Was haben wir hier?!?” (Roughly translated: What the heck is going on with that!?!”) This led the family to transfer to First Saint Paul’s.

In the early mid-20th Century, the Sunday School was quite large. In the 1920s the staff included fifteen women as teachers. During Sunday school, First Saint Paul’s held a German service. Each Sunday during the war years in the 1940s after Sunday school was over, several students, including John, carried folding chairs to place in the aisles of the church for the 11 a.m. English service. Frequently on Sundays during World War II, John’s mother would invite a serviceman or two to join them for a meal at the Chaveriat’s home after church.

In the 1940s, during the early years of Rev. Louis Grother’s ministry, a church group for college-aged young adults called Gamma Delta met at First Saint Paul’s. This group was instrumental in leading John to marry Dorothea. As the story goes, John’s mother was hospitalized at Augustana Hospital. When Dorothea came to visit John’s mother’s hospital roommate, John talked to Dorothea enthusiastically about Gamma Delta. As a result, Dorothea later came to a Gamma Delta meeting with some of her girlfriends. Through the Gamma-Delta connection, John and Dorothea established the relationship that culminated in marriage.

Pastor Louis Grother (1937-1949) held evening services at Walther Memorial Hospital for nurses who had to work the morning shift on Sundays. This was quite a drive for Pastor Grother since the hospital was located 3200 west at Kedzie, just north of Division. This service was later to be relocated to First Saint Paul’s and held at 8 p.m. on

Sunday evenings. On Sunday afternoons, Pastor Grother often visited the Chaveriat home and played Chinese checkers with John and his three siblings. They could never beat Pastor Grother.

The annual church picnic was held on a Saturday in Lincoln Park. The children would assemble at the church in the morning and walk to the park with a police escort. The adults in the congregation would arrive in the afternoon. John has supplied a photograph (taken by Mr. Norbert Fleisher) showing about 15 Sunday School teachers at the picnic. As an 11-year old boy, John was visiting Maxwell Street after church with his father and brother on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.



Beginning in the early 1940s, Mrs. Rohrman (nee Hennig) was the semi-official greeter at First Saint Paul's. In addition, the church purchased its communion wine from her. Her husband was a large financial contributor to the congregation. In 1944, John's parents purchased the church's "old" parsonage at 1826 North Orleans. Over the years, John has met people who were married in the parsonage by Rev. Henry Kowert.