

Rev. Hill

DEDICATION CEREMONIES

FOR AN

HISTORICAL MARKER

FOR THE

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF DESSAU

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1984

A T

TWO O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

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OFF DESSAU ROAD

AT DESSAU COMMUNITY

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TAPED, PHOTOGRAPHED,  
TRANSCRIBED AND COMPILED

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MULKEY OWENS, MEMBER  
TRAVIS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF DESSAU  
(Transcript of tape)

Mulkey Owens: I am Mulkey Owens, a member of the Travis County Historical Commission. This is Saturday, October 20, 1984, at two o'clock in the afternoon. We are at the Dessau Lutheran Church in the Dessau Community for the purpose of dedicating an Historical Marker for this congregation.

G. J. Krueger, Master of Ceremonies: If I may have your attention just a moment please. I'd like to welcome each and every one of you today. We've had our first disaster just now. We was gonna toll the bell - all of you may have heard it ring one time and the rope broke. (Laughter). So, things are starting off on its right foot. We were gonna be honored with some ladies here today - I don't think they are in attendance - I don't think they made it. Well, we caught - my wife caught them up here at the church looking for the church that their daddy was the pastor of in the years 1894 to 1897. And lo and behold, it was this church. And these little ladies - they range in age from 90 to 87, 85 and 70, and I guess the weather kept them from making it. But --

In the background: What's their name?

G. J. Krueger: I'll try to --

In the background: Kupfernagel - Kupfernagel.

G. J. Krueger: You're better at it than I am at that.  
(Laughter).

In the background: Kupfernagel - Copper nail (Laughter).

G. J. Krueger: Pastor Muehlbrad will you have our opening prayer for us please.

Reverend A. H. Muehlbrad, Pastor Evangelical Lutheran Church of Pflugerville: I have here in front of me an old bible that was used for many years here - the church here at Dessau . I think it was begun to be used in 1915 and its a kind of remembrance of really why we are here today - that is we are giving thanks to God for his grace given to us through His words, for the many people who have lived and served in this little congregation throughout its years. Let us bow our heads for the opening prayer. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe. Your gifts are many and in wisdom You have made all things to give to Your glory. We thank You for the lives of our forefathers and mothers who lived in the faith and served You faithfully through the church. And as we dedicate this Historical Marker, may we give praise to You for Your church which brings Your Word to each of us. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

G. J. Krueger: Our next speaker was a pastor who served here from 1957 to 1963 - is that right, Pastor Hill?

Pastor Hill: Right.

G. J. Krueger: He will come to us and give us a little history about the church and about his years here.  
Pastor Hill.

Reverend Wilson V. Hill, Former pastor of Dessau Evangelical Lutheran Church: Thank you, Mr. Krueger, and

members of this assembly, children of the descendants of the forefathers.

History is being made here today on this hillside, overlooking the Dessau community. History was made here over a hundred and - many - well over a hundred years ago - possibly a hundred and thirty years ago. I learned a few facts from my grandparents. Both sets of grandparents came over from Germany when they were in their teens, and they came over in the late 1840's and early 1850's, and they told me - they came over from Germany and told me about where the different people from Germany came and where they settled and the like.

From my grandfather I learned this little ditty, and I want to tell it to you because when - in those years people just left Germany and flocked over to the United States, landing in Galveston, or Indianola, or in New York and those that landed in Galveston and Indianola went either to Frederickburg and New Braunfels and San Antonio or Austin and this area. Some in Galveston went up that way and settled in Brenham and in other areas. And this little ditty went something like this - my grandfather told me this when I was around eight or nine years old, and I remembered it. Those of you that know the German will find it not too nonsenseless for you. It went something like this: "Ein, zwei, drei, vier, funf, sechs, sieben; wo ist mein schatz nun leben; er est nicht hier; er est nicht da; er muss sein auf Nord America. (Laughter). There was many a sweetheart over there didn't know what happened to her fiance. It went like this: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven; where is my sweetheart now living; he's not here; he's not there; he must be in North America. (Laughter).



Now the translation wasn't as good as the original, but I thought it was a cute little ditty, so when I was in Germany in 1953, I told that little ditty, and I asked some of those older, older people over there if they had ever heard it and some of them had, and some of them remarked to me about how forlorn many of them felt when family after family came over to settle over here in the United States, and a lot of them just picked up over night and came over.

When my father-in-law, who was also born, educated, trained, and was a pastor in these United States, told me this story. And I thought it was cute and I think its worth telling. He was telling about this. People said when they first came over here and some of their relatives over there and others would come over and say, "now, when you go over there, I want you to look up my relatives". Now, of course, its much cuter in German but I'm not gonna tell it in German, because I don't know if I'd be able to translate it, but it went something like this, you know, they would ask, "Where do your relatives live in the United States?" - they called it North America. And they said, "Well, you take a boat out of Hamburg, and when the boat arrives in New York, you take a left and they live down there somewhere". (Laughter).

Well, history is being made here today, but history was made here in those eighteen hundred and fifties, 'cause the records in Travis County show that there was a community called Dessau in 1854, for its along about that time that Martin Weiland and his family came over from Germany, as also Gustav Grosskopf, and

Fritz Krueger, Andreas or Andrew Krueger, and Willie Hennig, and they settled in this immediate area. And they named this area Dessau after Dessau, Germany, and the community in Dessau where Martin Weiland came from. Dessau was listed in Austin as being twelve miles north of town. Well, I guess its still twelve miles north of town. (Laughter).

When the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad was built through here, affectionately known to us all as the Katy Railroad, it had a stop over here at Sprinkle, and then went on through Pflugerville, and by-passed Round Rock, then on to Georgetown and intersected the railroad from Houston on up to over at Granger. But Dessau was a stop on the Katy Railroad.

Now this information that -- a lot of this information that I'm giving you was researched and compiled by Margaret Dickens and I'm deeply appreciative to her for this information.

Dessau, as late as 1940, some of you may remember that, had two stores. When I got here - Pflugerville in 1957 - I remember only a house and a store, and, of course, the dance hall, and then they had that little county motel back of it, you know, called the jail. And I understand its still there but they moved it back of the present dance hall somewhere.

History was made here in the 1870's, for even as late as 1940, Dessau had a population of about thirty people. Now, I'm sure no record has been made recently of the

population but all of us know that it has grown.

The history of Moses, you know, was standing - in the Old Testament days, tells us Moses was standing before the burning bush and the voice of God spoke to him and said, "Remove your shoes, you are standing on holy ground", hallowed ground and we are here this afternoon, sitting here, before this church and on this property, in a sense, are on - this is a hallowed occasion, and in a sense, hallowed ground. For hallowed is the memory of those families that we've just named. For in addition to the five that we've named Christian, Carl Nauert and the Christian Nehring family also came and settled in this area, and soon other settlers drifted in, and drifted in until this became quite a strong Lutheran community. But the important thing about these families is that they began almost immediately after they settled here to conduct prayer sessions in their homes, and bible studies in their homes, alternating, going from one home to another, until in the early 1870's when they decided that there were enough people here interested in forming a church so that they started a movement to form a congregation here on this very spot, and this church building for whom we are seated. History was made here and hallowed, I say, be the memory when in 1874 eight acres of land were purchased from Christian Nehring - I believe the Christian Nehring farm was just back of us here - for ten dollars - whew, what a fantastic sum. Ten dollars for a church and a parsonage. That was in 1874. In 1877 two more acres were included for the original ten dollars, for the

cemetery and the school house.

Now I remember when I was pastor here, that old Earnest Mueller told me that the parsonage was back here (waving to the northwest) - just back of the well here, and the barn, for the horses and the like, was back over there. and the cemetery is behind you, before me, and the school house sat down below the cemetery there. The church and the parsonage were built, it is thought, about 1876 and the construction of the building was made possible by labors and materials furnished by the members of the congreg-- , well not by members of the congregation, but by settlers of the community as well as by members that were joining the congregation. And the construction was supervised by one of the early settlers, by Fritz Krueger. I think it would be interesting if anyone can add to some of these figures. And if you know of anything that can be added, be sure to tell Margaret Dickens about this.

We know that the school was consolidated and we don't know when the school building was removed from here, but the school itself was consolidated with Pflugerville in 1920. I, again, say history was made here and hallowed be the history - when back in - when addition was made to the church to which the belfrey was added and the steeple and the spire, and the large bell was placed in there - you heard one ring of it today when the rope broke. I heard it ring many a time when I was pastor here and it has a beautiful tone. I hope someday we can get it reactivated with the rope renewed and all of that and reactivated.

All the records - the existing church records of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Dessau, listing the baptisms, the confirmations, the weddings, the funerals, the communions are in the church vault at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Pflugerville for safe-keeping. These records show that as early as 1876 a baptism took place here in the church. In 1883 William Nauert was baptized by Pastor E. Schroeder, and I think we can again say, hallowed be the memory of such. It is also noted at this point that services here in this church, as in many, many Lutheran churches in Texas, were conducted in the German language until the mid-1940's.

It was my privilege to serve here from October, 1957, to the first part of December, 1963. The last service conducted here was in January, 1973, by Pastor Donald Lichemeier. Pastor Schwartz, it might have been pastors prior to that but I gained this information from you here - Pastor Schwartz, Pastor Knopp, and one or two others that served in there, and then Pastor Hartmann, and myself, and Pastor Lichemeier - did he serve here also. Alright, good, come on with that information - this is what we need to know - sure - Evangelical Lutheran Church of Dessau continues as a congregation of the Southern District of the American Lutheran Church, and prior to the merger that resulted in the American Lutheran Church, it was a member of the Texas District of the Iowa Synod of Lutheran Churches.

This congregation has a yearly meeting here in the church at which meeting descendants of the early founders of the

congregation and members of the church and of the Cemetery Organization and Association meet. And there will be a meeting of the congregation this afternoon, I understand, at the conclusion of these festivities.

On several occasions in the recent past, Sunday School classes of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Pflugerville have held meetings here, and, I can say without exception, and without contradiction, and without exception these groups have come away inspired, moved emotionally and they had, what they felt, was a deep spiritual experience in being in this old church here on Dessau - at Dessau. So hallowed is this ground, and we are in the shadow of this church, this steeple, and spire point upward and we think of those baptized, confirmed at this altar, who sang hymns of praise, and thanksgiving, offering prayers of petition and praise. Hallowed is this area also - hallowed be their memory as we later look to the back where you are sitting to the cemetery where is buried loved ones who once walked, talked, and sang and worshipped here with you and with us. This dedication and zeal made it possible for this church to come to this point today, that we can say history is again being made here at Dessau.

I believe that Abraham Lincoln said something in his Gettysburg Address about the living having to rededicate and reconsecrate themselves to a cause and we would like to say it is for us here today to rededicate and reconsecrate ourselves to this cause - to this church - to this congregation. People are here in this area. they need to be served, and dedicated on the part of all is required to bring about a revitalization of this

church and this congregation and we pray unto the grace of God that it can soon be brought to a realization. And we are here today, ladies and gentlemen, to dedicate a Historical Marker and if those who are in charge of unveiling the marker will come forward, we will now dedicate this marker.

(Earnest and Florin Mueller proceeded to the marker and unveiled it)

Reverend Hill: Bless and dedicate this Historical Marker to the past which reflects and to the future which is a proposal to the challenge to us.

G. J. Krueger: All of you, possibly some of you, don't know that Earnest Mueller is the president of the church and Florin is the vice-president. I think on our records we incorporated back in '76 (1976). We found we had three members who were still members of this original congregation. Florin was one, Hazel another and Mr. Bankston. They are our - Earnest will read you the inscription on the marker.

Earnest Mueller, President of the Congregation: We have a marker here which we are very proud of.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH OF DESSAU

THE COMMUNITY OF DESSAU WAS  
FOUNDED IN 1854 BY GERMAN IM-  
MIGRANTS, INCLUDING THE WIELAND,  
NAUERT, NEHRING, GROSSKOPF, KRUEGER,  
GOERLITZ, AND HENNIG FAMILIES. THE  
PIONEERS WORSHIPPED IN PRIVATE  
HOMES UNTIL THIS SANCTUARY WAS  
BUILT ABOUT 1876. LABOR AND MA-  
TERIALS USED IN ITS CONSTRUCTION  
WERE SUPPLIED BY MEMBERS OF  
THE COMMUNITY. WORSHIP SERVICES

WERE CONDUCTED IN THE GERMAN  
LANGUAGE UNTIL THE MID-1900S.  
THE CHURCH BUILDING AND ADJOINING  
CEMETERY STAND AS REMINDERS  
OF THE AREA'S PIONEER GERMAN  
HERITAGE. (1984)

G. J. Krueger: I don't know about the rest of you all, but to me its beautiful. I want to thank all of you. This is the biggest crowd that I've seen here in quite a number of years. Had the weather not broken, I'm sure the church would have been full. I want to thank each and every one of you. I want to call on Pastor Muehlbrad for the benediction.

(NOTE: It was very difficult to understand Reverend Muehlbrad as he didn't speak into the mike. The following is the best that I could do. JMO).

Reverend A. H. Muehlbrad: Pastor Hill had mentioned for you to add anything. I think I mentioned it to you before concerning the history. An old book came in my possession which was headed for the garbage can - an old envelope like sometimes when throwing away old things and an individual said this looks like it should be given the church, so I brought it by, and I opened those up and some of the first congregation, the first constitution and the letters of charter members of the congregation which was formed on the Lisso Farm between here and Pflugerville, and it was a composite of the Pflugerville people - and I looked for charter members names - and I saw on there the Nauarts and, I think, Wielands, also the Bohls and Pflugers. It was all one congregation at one time - I think the year was 1871. The congregation existed for approximately two years, and then it dissolved



and later formed this congregation. I just thought I'd mention that to you as a kind of advance for the beginning of both congregations. Also we've been looking at the past, and, of course, we also want to look at the future.

Dessau is now on the eyes of our Mission Task Force now and something may be done in the future - near future - because we've done some work on this and I feel like something will be happening. The mission director of the Southern District of the American Church has been on the property already and looked over the area, and has talked to me about it some-time ago and I'm still waiting to hear from the others. Also, I'd like to introduce the pastor of the future, and you'll see more of him, especially if there is a mission to start here. Both of us are pastors. I would like to introduce to you Pastor and Mrs. Zesch who are the other pastor of Emmanuel Church. Will you please rise. (Pastor and Mrs. Zesch stood) (Applause).

Now if you'll bow our heads for the prayer: O Lord, be with us now and bless the fruits of those who labor. We've looked at the past. May we also look to the future. We pray that a new congregation will arise from the dust of the past to serve the people of this area. Grant us faith to know Your gracious purpose in all things. Grant Your blessings to us through the bounty of Your generous creation, for Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. The blessing of the Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.