

# LUTHERAN MEMOIR

## SAINT SEBALD CHURCH STRAWBERRY POINT, IOWA

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CHURCH

Rev. Johannes Deindoerfer and the Rev. G.M. Grossman came to Clayton county Iowa from Germany with 20 students and colonists settling at Saint Sebald in the fall of 1853. The parsonage was built and used as a church and school. The German title, “Saint Sebald am Quell” which translates to “ Saint Sebald by the Spring” was selected for the facility.

It was at this location the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa was organized in 1854. The first church of the Lutheran denomination in Iowa.

Missionary efforts among the indigenous peoples of Montana and Wyoming originated in 1857 by Missionary Moritz Braeuninger. In 1864 warnings of an attack by indigenous people on their station located at Deer Creek, a tributary of the North Platte River, induced them to return to Iowa. Three Cheyenne boys, Brown Moccasin, Little Bone and Owl Head, returned with the missionaries to the Wartburg Seminary at Saint Sebald. Their hair was cut short, they were dressed in Lutheran men’s clothing, baptized and given the names of Gottfried, Paulus and Friedrich. Gottfried and Paulus died of disease in 1865 and are buried in the Saint Sebald cemetery. Friedrich ran away from the community.

In “*The Formation and Influence of St. Sebald Lutheran Church*” Samantha Schwarz, University of Pretoria writes, “A single monument marks the graves of two American Indians who were part of the mission work conducted by St. Sebald Lutheran Church to the surrounding regions. The lives of these two individuals have been reduced to a single statement on the monument: Here two baptized Indians rest in God.”

The Saint Sebald (Wartburg) Seminary was built and dedicated on October 31, 1857. The Seminary operated here until it moved to Mendota, Illinois, May 18, 1875. In 1899 the Seminary moved again, this time to Dubuque, Iowa, where it is still located. The present Saint Sebald church building was erected in 1867, and still serves a regular and active congregation.



Saint Sebald Lutheran Church  
Photo by Reginald Green 2024

NorthEastern Iowa SYNOD



Racial Justice Web page



Monument marker written in German. Photo by Reginald Green 2024



Saint Sebald in a Niche 1518. Public Domain image

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How might Christians conduct missionary work in a racially just manner?
- Consider John 3:16, discuss if to be Christian was it necessary for Brown Moccasin, Little Bone and Owl Head to be baptized with a new German name, cut their hair and wear Lutheran men's cloths?
- Would the missionary work of the Saint Sebald pastors from 1857 to 1864 in Montana and Wyoming be considered a success based on current standards?

## REFERENCES

Links to PDF files concerning Saint Sebald Lutheran Church

Baptized @ St. Sebald = <https://lutheranmuseum.com/2022/08/26/baptized-at-st-sebald-lutheran-strawberry-point-ia/>

St. Sebald - Locating Lutheranism = <https://pages.stolaf.edu/locluth/project/st-sebald-lutheran-church-strawberry-point-iowa/>

Clayton County churches = [http://iagenweb.org/clayton/church/GermanLutheran\\_StrawPt.htm](http://iagenweb.org/clayton/church/GermanLutheran_StrawPt.htm)

UWM Undergrad Rel Studies Conf = <https://dc.uwm.edu/rso/2015/panel3/3/>

The full history of families moving to Strawberry Point to establish the church can be found in Rev Albert Llewelyn Hock's book, *THE PILGRIM COLONY* (Lutheran University Press 2004).



The article below is from The Oelwein Daily Register, February 10, 1943 p.12. The article provides some historical details.

## STRAWBERRY PT.

### St. Sebald Church Held 75th Anniversary Sunday

St. Sebald Lutheran church, located five miles northwest of here, observed its 75th anniversary of the building of the church by special services Sunday.

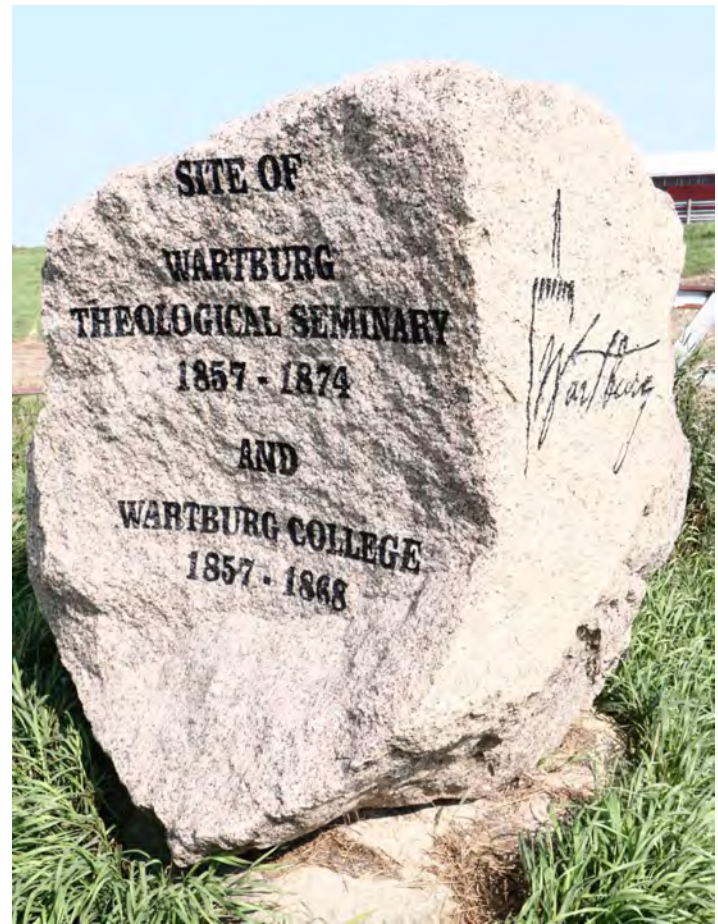
The St. Sebald congregation had been organized by professors of the seminary, located here at that time, in the year 1854, and for the first few years the services were conducted by the professors. Later, a full-time pastor was called.

The first building was a small frame structure, which served for the parsonage, church, and bible school. It was voted to build the present church building in the fall of 1867. Much native material was used and other material was hauled from McGregor by ox team. The pews were home-made and the first altar was fashioned from a large drygoods box.

In 1918, at the time that the diamond anniversary was observed, a pipe organ was added. Other improvements have later been added.

The congregation has had six pastors in all. They are: J. List, until 1875; G. W. Fuehr, 1875-1918; L. Gehrt, 1918-1920; F. W. Knappe, 1920-1926; G. Melchert, 1926-1936; Rev. Paul Eilers, 1936-.

Monument recognizing the historic locations of both Wartburg Seminary and Wartburg College in Saint Sebald. At the bottom of the page is a painting of the seminary currently on display in St. Sebald Church's narthex.



WARTBURG SEMINARY  
SAINT SEBALD, IOWA