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Marie Cordes Memoir

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Interview and memoir

1 tape, 30 mins., 13 pp.

Cordes recalls rural life in Farmingdale, Illinois during the early to mid 20th century and also discusses Immanuel Lutheran Church and German-Americans.

Interview by Virginia Bomke, 1972

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Preface

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview by Virginia Bomke for the Oral History Office, Sangamon State University in November, 1972. Rosalyn Bone transcribed the tape and Ellen Waggoner edited the transcript.

Marie Cordes was born in Richland, Illinois, June 6, 1900. She lived in Richland and near Farmingdale all her life and recalls changes she has seen in Farmingdale. She also relates the early history of the Immanuel Lutheran Church, founded by Germans, in Farmingdale in 1898.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Marie Cordes, November 14, 1972, Pleasant Plains, Illinois.

Virginia Bomke, Interviewer.

Q. . . . early settlement by Missouri-Synod Lutherans from Germany, to the community around Farmingdale. How did it happen that enough Lutherans came here to found the Immanuel Lutheran Church?

A. Well, there was just more Lutherans located around here and they decided that they would like to have a Lutheran church at Farmingdale.

Q. Yes, my next question has been answered. Did they come as a body or group or did they come separately? Partially answered.

A. Well, they didn't come in a group or they didn't come separately. Sometimes there's a few couples come together and sometimes, you know, they come one alone, too.

Q. Did they come from Germany to the Atlantic Coast and then migrate west, or did they come to the Midwest directly from Germany?

A. They came to the Midwest directly from Germany.

Q. What was the year of the founding of the Immanuel Lutheran Church, which has since been sold?

A. On November 5th, 1898. The first service for a group of Lutherans in the vicinity of Farmingdale was held when Professor Streckfuss of Concordia Seminary in Springfield preached in the local Presbyterian church. This arrangement, which necessitated afternoon services, continued for a few months but beginning with May 1899 services were held in the Farmingdale public school. And of course, service was held in the morning. Immediately following the command of Christ to His church to feed his lambs, his Sunday school was begun and sessions were previous to the church service. During the summer months the Sunday school was further augmented by a day school which was taught by students from the Springfield Seminary. This led to the first confirmation class which was made up of four boys and they were received into communion with a new group on Palm Sunday in 1901.

Q. Did you say November 1902 was the date of its first dedication?

A. In 1902--in the spring of 1902 the congregation was formally organized. Professor Streckfuss presented the constitution which was adopted on April the 20th, 1902 by eight voting members. The following men made up the first church council: Andrew Bloechle, Charlie Bomke, George Minder, and Michael Cordes. And a group of Lutherans from Salisbury, who had

been having services in the Christian church of that town and were served by Pastor Caulk of Petersburg, joined with Farmingdale. After this amalgamation the school building proved to be too small, so the congregation decided to build a church. A lot was purchased from Mr. Guard in Farmingdale for seventy-five dollars. And the church was erected at a cost of about one thousand dollars by Mr. Barths. The building which is the present church was dedicated on November the 2nd, 1902.

Q. These pioneer Lutherans were of the Missouri Synod. Why did they come to live here at Farmingdale and surrounding countryside? I suppose I mean why did these pioneer Lutherans of the Missouri Synod come to live here at Farmingdale and surrounding countryside?

A. As I say, some of them had relatives here and they were already living here and that's the reason they settled around Farmingdale.

Q. Which came first, the settlement here in Illinois from Germany or the affiliation with the Missouri Synod? I mean, did they have connection between Germany and the Missouri Synod that they--missions?

A. No. No.

Q. The full name of that organization in the centennial booklet I have of the Missouri Synod is The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States.

A. Yes, but that isn't . . . is isn't that way any more. I mean . . . No, it's just the Lutheran Church of Missouri Synod, now.

Q. I see. Immanuel Lutheran Church. Who were the pastors of this church?

A. The very first pastor was Professor Streckfuss and he was here from 1902 until . . . until 1924. So he was here twenty-two years. After the death of Professor Streckfuss then we were without a permanent pastor for a little over three years. During this vacancy, the congregation was served by the following vacancy pastors: Professor Hoffman of Concordia Seminary, Pastor Wegehof of Chatham, Pastor K. H. Hein of New Berlin, and Pastor Keiser of Athens. In May 1926 the congregation decided to request a vicar for the following year. Mr. Pfothenhauer was assigned to the congregation and he served until the end of April 1927 when he tendered his resignation. It was during the vicarage of Mr. Pfothenhauer that a Young People's Society was organized in the congregation. The same meeting in which Mr. Pfothenhauer's resignation was accepted the congregation decided to extend the call to the Reverend Raedecker. When Pastor Raedecker returned the call, it was decided to place a call with the board of assignments at their coming meeting in St. Louis. This move was successful and a long-vacant congregation was assigned candidate W. H. Ditscher, a graduate of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. On September 18, 1927 in the morning service, the congregation's annual missions festival, the Reverend Ditscher was ordained and installed by Professor Kline, the president of Springfield Seminary. Since the congregation had no resident pastor prior to Pastor Ditscher, it was now necessary to procure a parsonage. In November . . .

Q. That's a question I had here. Did you have a parsonage from the beginning?

A. No. In November 1927, the decision was made to buy a parsonage. And the house that they bought for a parsonage was occupied by the Hanna family. And a year later in the fall of 1928 a furnace was installed in this building. And Ladies Aid was organized during Pastor Ditscher's service here. Twenty-three ladies was present at this meeting. And in . . . in 1930, why Pastor Ditscher accepted a call to Marshalltown, Iowa. And in October 1930, the congregation called the Reverend E. A. Dautenhahn who was here then for twenty-three years.

Q. Until the church joined, decided to join other . . .

A. With Pleasant Plains.

Q. With Pleasant Plains, then?

A. Yes. Pleasant Plains and . . .

Q. Mt. _____?

A. No. Pleasant Plains and Farmingdale decided to have the same pastor. The two congregations decided to have the same pastor. And then in . . .

Q. Well, that's as far as this should go for now because I have another question which . . .

A. Okay.

Q. Describe the transition from the German tongue to English, as spoken by Americans, as we call ourselves today.

A. Our very first English language spoken in our church was the day of dedication, the service in the afternoon was spoken in the English language. But as far as having English services, we didn't have any English services till during World War I.

Q. How soon--that's what I asked you--how soon was English preached from the pulpit? That would be World War I. It wasn't from the beginning which you had English in the afternoon service of the dedication, 1902.

A. Yes.

Q. Being of the Christian faith, it should not be too hard to adopt a worldwide attitude toward life, and people, I should think. Who were the founders of the Immanuel Lutheran Church of Farmingdale in 1902?

A. Well, I would say it would be these first four that was on the council.

Q. On the council.

A. Yes.

Q. What are your memories of World War I, as it affected your people in the community?

A. Well, I think it affected our people in the community very much because it was a very much--our church was very much of a German spoken church and of course, with the war, why, we had to turn to English.

Q. Were there many from your church drafted, or who served in the armed services at that time?

A. There were several, yes.

Q. Who were some of them?

A. Ahlert Memken was one of them and George Boesdorfer and Cluny Boesdorfer and Willy Boesdorfer. Just offhand I can't think of anyone else.

Q. Albert Brandt?

A. Albert Brandt, yes.

Q. I don't know whether they were all drafted.

A. Yes.

Q. Occupations. Now, this doesn't have to do with World War I. This has to do with early local Farmingdale medicine. Who were some of the doctors of the community, as you remember them? In early . . .

A. Doctor Henry Lutyens was a doctor there for a good many years. And there was a doctor before him but I can't remember his name.

Q. Was there any doctor after Doctor Lutyens?

A. No, after Doctor Henry Lutyens left, why then, we didn't have any resident doctor in Farmingdale.

Q. Farming. How did this progress through the years?

A. Progressed very well.

Q. Do you remember who had the other blacksmith shop in Farmingdale, besides Charles Bomke?

A. I didn't know that there was another blacksmith in . . .

Q. Someone that I've interviewed has mentioned that there was.

A. Henry Kuder was the one that run it.

Q. That's who they said.

A. Henry Kuder was the one that run Charlie Bomke's blacksmith shop.

Q. Politics. Who were some of the people who held various offices in the community?

A. Well, Harry Happer.

Q. This is politics.

A. Yes. And Bert Watts was supervisor. Harry Happer was county clerk. And Rolland Stone, of course, Rolland Stone was not of our church. Weren't any of these of our church.

Q. No, that's all right.

A. Yes.

Q. This is just politics.

A. Yes.

Q. Were the people of the Lutheran church pretty well divided as to political party affiliation?

A. Well, I would say so, yes.

Q. World War II. Who were some of the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church who served in World War II? There were some _____ I don't know.

A. Boehme boys, Elmer Boesdorfer, Walter Boesdorpher, Rolland Boesdorfer. Just offhand I can't

Q. And the Bloechle--while they weren't--let's see. Paul Bloechle, was he a Lutheran?

A. Paul Bloechle, was he in service?

Q. Was he in service, yes.

A. Arthur I mean

Q. No, Alfred Bloechle.

A. Alfred Bloechle was in service.

Q. That's what I mean.

A. Yes, Alfred Bloechle was in service.

Q. Education. Describe the progress of education as experienced by you and your associates.

A. Well, the education has had quite a change since the time that we used to go to a one-room schoolhouse and everybody had to walk to school. Now,

I mean, they have consolidated schools and everybody rides the bus to school. One teacher used to have thirty children and have all grades. Now they don't have it that way.

Q. Concordia College in Springfield had quite a bit of influence among the Lutherans of the community; did any of the youth of the community attend Concordia Seminary in Springfield?

A. Victor Dautenhahn did.

Q. Where did--that's the next question--where did Victor Dautenhahn study for the ministry?

A. Springfield.

Q. I thought he went to River . . . Oh, he vicared at Riverton?

A. Yes, near Chicago.

Q. What other colleges did the people of the church attend?

A. Oh, there some of them went to universities, University of Illinois, and different colleges around.

Q. Blackburn was one of them?

A. Yes, Blackburn. Ella Dautenhahn and Eleanor Bomke went to Blackburn. Yes.

Q. Name some outstanding people and . . .

A. Enumeration.

Q. . . . and events in local Farmingdale history, as you recall them.

A. Oh . . . Well, I think Harry Happer was a very outstanding man. I mean he was a farmer and he also served as circuit clerk for years, a good many years, how many terms he served.

Q. Was that circuit clerk or county clerk?

A. County clerk. Maybe it was. John Bomke was an outstanding man. I mean he was involved in Farm Bureau, he was involved in . . .

Q. Business?

A. Business, yes. Farming.

Q. Sold machinery?

A. He sold machinery and he was involved in a lot of things. And of course, there used to be three grocery stores in Farmingdale at one time, you know, and a post office.

Q. All at one time. Who were the three that were there at one time?

A. Charlie Bomke was running one store and Happers had a store on the east side of the hard road and that was Les McGrady that used to run that and then what used to be the Schmidt's store on the north side of the railroad, there was three stores there at one time. Bert Watts, I think, run that once upon a time. And then there used to be a post office there. Mr. John Knudson used to run that for a good many years.

Q. Some of these other people mentioned that they had a grocery store and they had this post office in the grocery store.

A. Yes, yes. There was a little corner taken off of the grocery store and that's where the post office was. Yes.

Q. One other thing that isn't Farmingdale but right here on this place-- Albert Brandt, the Brandts when they lived there, they say there's an old post office there. Now, what was that called, that post office?

A. Well, there used to be that old house was an inn. It was a hotel where the stagecoach used to stop. It was an inn and it had a post office in it, yes.

Q. Just like they have at Clayville, only this hasn't been preserved?

A. Yes. It was torn down. But it was the stagecoach stop. Yes. The rooms were real big and, oh, there were twice as many rooms there when the Cordes family came there as what there was later years because they tore about half of it down because it was so big.

Q. Are there any other events in local Farmingdale that you . . . What was the name of the man that got killed dynamiting? They said his name was Fetzer but they didn't know his first name.

A. Henry.

Q. Henry Fetzer?

A. Henry Fetzer. That was near Richland where he got killed.

Q. And was he dynamiting some rocks and stumps, but someone said something about near a bridge.

A. It was near a bridge, yes. It was just right there off the hard road.

Q. I heard someone report about dynamite not long ago and they said dynamite always explodes downward. I don't know where I heard that just recently. Maybe that had something to do with that.

A. No.

Q. Oh, they were talking about mining, on these tape recorders.

A. No.

Q. And they said dynamite always explodes downward.

A. That was Adella Hofing and Mable Park's dad that got killed, Henry Fetzter was his name. They lived right up here.

Q. West of Farmingdale?

A. Yes, west of Farmingdale. Yes.

Q. Well, we've discussed the road building and Rolland Stone and I asked questions of others. Do you remember anything about the road building?

A. When the hard road went through?

Q. Yes.

A. There used to be a covered bridge there, too, on the Farmingdale road. Where that bridge is there on the creek there by the Presbyterian church. There used to be a covered bridge there, but I can't say when the hard road came through. I don't know. That's been a good many years ago, but I just don't remember. Used to never could travel the Farmingdale Road the spring of the year when it got--frost came out of the ground because there was so many springs in the road. You couldn't get through.

Q. Do you remember the railroad stopping at Farmingdale?

A. Oh, well, there used to be a depot at Farmingdale, too. First there was a depot on the south side of the road that was just a small depot and then they built a new, nice, big depot on the north side of the railroad made out of brick, I think. But then they tore it down eventually, too. They used to have an elevator there and it burned down.

Q. Where did you live when you lived in the vicinity of Farmingdale?

A. I never lived in the vicinity of Farmingdale. I lived at Richland.

Q. Oh?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, I mean after you married you lived north of Farmingdale.

A. Here. I lived right here. North of Farmingdale, northwest. That's the only two places I've ever lived.

Q. Would you say that Farmingdale was considerably larger in population than it used to be?

A. No, it's smaller.

Q. But the people north of Farmingdale would make it.

A. Yes.

Q. But that is not in Farmingdale.

A. No.

Q. Right. That's by the school. That would make more population. But in the township definitely there's more but not in Farmingdale.

A. No, Farmingdale used to be a bigger place than it is now. I mean, as far as just right the town, right around. Of course, it's building up further north, now, but I know . . .

Q. What do you recall about Farmingdale's early interest in aviation?

A. I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

Q. It said . . . my husband speaks with interest, I said _____ the time when Charles Lindbergh used to carry the mail between St. Louis and to Chicago, about this.

A. Well, he used to land there, you know, north of the hard road, there. North of Doc Roberts' place, that's where he used to land. Charles Lindbergh.

Q. You don't remember when the post office of Farmingdale closed down?

A. No, I don't. It was still going in 1914, but how much longer it went after that, I don't think it went too much longer after that.

Q. Automobiles were becoming more plentiful, I would suppose that has something to do with it, you think?

A. Well, yes, I mean, they changed it to Pleasant Plains, or changed the route around to Pleasant Plains, some of it, of course--are you on Pleasant Plains route?

Q. Yes, we're on the corner of it.

A. Yes, southwest corner. Well, the Farmingdale post office just wasn't

Q. Do you know what year the elevator in Farmingdale closed down?

A. No, I don't know that, either.

Q. I thought maybe it was during the Depression and I asked this question. It seems to me that Rob said that it went under--my husband--before the Depression hit.

A. Yes, I wouldn't doubt what it did. I don't know.

Q. There was a grocery store in Farmingdale during the Depression years?

A. Oh, yes, yes. Schmidt's grocery store was there, you know, a good many years after them other two wasn't there. Mr. and Mrs. Bumgardner used to run it, you know.

Q. That was during the war years.

A. George Schmidts run it, you know.

Q. They ran it during the war years, didn't they? Or after World War II?

A. George Schmidts run it for a while, you know.

Q. That was before I came into this community. Let's see
Well, I thank you for your cooperation in recording this local history and let's hope it's worth something.

END OF TAPE