



**ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH** was built in Norcat in 1888 by a small group of charter members. The Decatur County Museum board is trying to raise money to move the church to the museum grounds and restore it.

## Landmark to move to Oberlin museum

Plans are in the works to move a Norcat landmark to the Decatur County Museum grounds so the 116-year-old St. Mark's Lutheran Church can be saved for future generations.

The museum board is raising money to move the church and also begin the work needed to restore it.

The building has been offered to the museum by three remaining council members, Bill and Bee Nelson and Lee Eckhart.

Museum Director Sharleen Wurm said the church will be placed on the museum grounds east of the Bohemian Hall, which was moved to the museum in 2000.

The idea is to raise the money to move the building, the steeple, which will have to be taken off for the move and to do some work on the building once it is in Oberlin before actually moving the building. Mrs. Wurm said the church, dedicated in December 1888, is actually in pretty good shape.

The building will need to be repainted and will also need a new roof because it has had hail damage. Mrs. Wurm said they also need a new heater and some electrical work.

Just to move the church will cost over \$20,000, and then it will take at least another \$20,000 to restore it. Mrs. Wurm said \$20,000 may not be enough.

She said she isn't sure if power lines will have to be raised to move the building or not and doesn't know what that cost will be.

The board has started working on fund raisers for the project. She said the museum received a grant from the Cathcart-Cantrell trust and the

Modern Woodmen raised over \$5,000 for the project.

The director said the church has a long history in Norcat. Both Mr. Nelson's and Mr. Eckhart's great-grandfathers were charter members of the church and helped build it.

The whole thing started when Maggie Eckhart and Lois Rinckenberger wanted to get married in 1888.

The couple began looking for a Lutheran minister and found the Rev. J.W. Kimmel in McCook.

On Feb. 2 of that year, he came to Norcat to perform the wedding. That brought on the discussion of having regular services.

The pastor returned to Norcat in May to hold services. At that time, there were 17 members in the church.

Mr. Kimmel looked into buying lots in Norcat for a church site through the secretary of Lincoln Land Co. In June 1888, he reported that he had purchased lots 7 and 8 in block 7. For \$50, a 28-foot-by-40-foot building could be completed in 12 months on the site.

In June, the first communion service was held. John Eckhart and Benjamin Hoover were elected elders and N.B. Nelson and John Summit were elected deacons. The other members were called charter members.

Later that summer, the first load of stone was delivered and foundation work was started. All of the labor was donated. Reports show that the only cost on the foundation was \$2.50 for lime.

In a large service on Sept. 8, 1888, the cornerstone was laid. Rev. Pugh

preached and the Norcat band and choir performed.

The history of the church shows that the lumber was delivered on Sept. 3. It was purchased from C.M. Deitz of Omaha for \$387.20, with \$98 being paid for freight.

The windows were bought from Chicago with \$110. Other expenses included furniture for \$115, additional lumber for \$90, hardware for \$41, a bell for \$88 and an organ for \$65.

In December, a mortgage of \$300 was given to the Board of Church Extension and one for \$400 was given to John Eckhart, each to be paid in three years.

On Dec. 16, 1888, the church was dedicated.

The congregation went through many changes from that dedication to 1984, the last time the church had a pastor.

The mortgage note changed hands, a new roof was put on, the inside was replastered, a parsonage was built next door, the parsonage got a bathroom and many pastors preached in the building.

Mrs. Wurm said the museum would like to see the church used again. The whole idea started with a couple wanting to get married. She said she would like to see it used for small weddings after it is moved and fixed up.

The museum is looking for donations to help with the project. Send money to 258 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749, or stop in and see the staff.

Museum hours starting Sept. 1 are 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.



**ON THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY**, Mr. and Mrs. John Eckhart spoke with the Rev. Ott, who was a supply pastor at the church.