

Steeple moved alone

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St. Mark's Lutheran Church, a landmark in Norcatour since 1888, was moved to the Last Indian Raid Museum grounds in Oberlin in September 2005.

It was offered to the museum by three remaining council members, Bill and Bee Nelson and Lee Eckhart, who wanted it saved for future generations.

The idea was to raise the money to move the building, including the steeple, which had to be removed for the move, and do some restoration work, said Sharleen Wurm, director of the museum.

Cost to move the church was estimated at \$20,000, with at least another \$20,000 needed to restore it, she said. The museum board held numerous fundraisers and Mrs. Wurm said that the museum also received a grant from the Cathcart-Cantrell Trust and the Modern Woodmen raised over \$5,000 for the project.

She said that the church has a long history in Norcatour. Both of Mr. Nelson's and Mr. Eckhart's great-grandfathers were charter member of the church and helped build it.

The whole thing started when Maggie Eckhart and Louis Rinkenberger 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 Norcatour to perform the wedding and that brought on the discussion of having regular services.

Mr. Kimmel checked into buying lots in Norcatour for a church site and in June 1888, he reported that he had purchased lots 7 and 8 in block 7. For \$50, a 28x40-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.J. Nelson and John Summit were elected deacons. Later that summer, the first load of stone was delivered and foundation work was started with all volunteer labor. The only cost on the foundation was \$2.50 for lime.

The church was dedicated on Dec. 16, 1888, and the congregation went through many changes from that time until 1984, the last time the church had a pastor.

Since the steeple had to be removed for the move, the first refurbishing job on the church was putting it back on top of the building. Since it was already on the ground, the museum board decided to start at the top of the church and work down in the restoration, Greg Fidele, a board member, made some new metal shingles and repaired some of the old ones.

Other work has included painting the exte-



ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH was hoisted by a crane to the top of the building after it was restored on the museum grounds. It was a landmark in Norcatour for many years.

rior, tearing off the inside plaster and restoring the original wainscoting on the interior walls, refinishing the floor, and adding pews from the Lyle church. The original pulpit and piano are still in the building and plans are to move the altar, which was from the rural St. John's Lutheran Church from another museum building, to the church building. Besides board members and

volunteers, some of the work has done by Michael Hoberty, who is hired man for the museum. A rededication service was held at the church on Sunday, Oct. 2, 2005, with Pastor Charlotte Strecker-Baseler, pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Oberlin, giving reflections. The ceremony made the church a non-denominational church instead of Lutheran one.

With the church records handed over to the museum, she said, "These records symbolize the joys and sorrows of the people of God in this place. Receive and preserve them so that the ministry of this congregation may be remembered."

Mrs. Wurm said money is still needed to complete work planned at the church.