

Churches in the Shenandoah Valley

St Paul's Lutheran Church, Jerome Parish
4109 Jerome Rd
Edinburg, VA 22824



A brief History

St Paul's congregation of Jerome was organized in 1827 - at that time they met in a one room log school house owned by Godfrey Miller -so the buildings was known as the Miller's School House. The school had been built from hand hewn logs sometime between 1813 and 1819. The school house stood where the parking lot south of the church stands today.

The first pastor was Rev. Ambrose Henkel who served from 1827 to 1836, and he was

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the son of Rev. Paul Henkel, both living in New Market. Ambrose made monthly visits by horse to St Paul's for a fee of \$1. He was the founder of the Henkel Printing business in New Market in 1806. He was followed by Rev Jacob Stirewalt, also from New Market who served St Paul's from 1837 to 1867 and during his time it was decided to build a church. The heirs of Godfrey Miller deeded on August 31st 1849, one acre of land where the school house had stood " ...to erect and build thereon a Church or house of Worship, and a part of said lot also to be occupied by a School , and a part as a burying ground..." Godfrey Miller had earlier reserved the right to appoint the trustees of the church and did appoint two young men, his grandsons, Lafayette and Jacob R. Miller.

The first church was completed in 1854 - located on the site where the present building stands, and measured approximately 24 feet wide and 54 feet long. All the work was donated except the labor of the carpenters. Four steps led to the chancel, and a plain pulpit was built which was used from 1880 to 1927.

In 1876, due to an increased population it was decided that a larger school house was needed and on July 2, 1876 Jacob R Miller and his wife Catharine deeded one acre to the school board of Ashby Township adjacent to the church lot. In 1909 the school board sold the lot to the church for \$1. A new school house was built east of what was to become the C.C. Miller farm, known as the Jerome School and the building still stands today looking westwards from the church.

From 1882 to 1886, the church was served by Rev. Jerome Paul Stirewalt, the son of Rev Jacob Stirewalt who had died in 1869, and tradition has it that the community was named Jerome after him. A post office was established November 18, 1886 and as there was no designated name available, Jerome became the name. On September 30, 1960 the post office was discontinued and the community is served from Edinburg, but the name Jerome still remains.

At a Congregational meeting held April 17, 1889 it was decided to build a larger church, and at a further meeting August 9, 1890, it was agreed to build a frame church 35 feet by 55 feet and 17.1/2 feet from floor to ceiling. Originally it was to be a brick church but because of a blight going through the country killing all the white pines, it was cheaper to use white pines killed by the blight

The building was completed in 1891 and had two doors in front-it was customary for men to enter by the right door and ladies through the left. Inside were two aisles leading to the chancel area. Carpeting used in both aisles and in and around the chancel was known as "straw carpet" The chancel was two feet high and on either side of the chancel were four steps up to the pulpit. On each side of the pulpit was mounted a pedestal. At the rear of the pulpit was a five feet long love seat type bench. At this time all eight windows were plain glass.

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Two sets of six feet pews were situated on either side of the church with a set of fourteen feet pews between the two aisles. Like most of the furniture in the church, these were hand made by local craftsmen. The organ was in the center of the church, in front of the 14 ft. pews and the choir sat on the first few of these benches.

The light fixtures for the chancel consisted on two green kerosene lamps which could be raised or lowered, with smaller kerosene lamps along the sides of the church. They had silver reflectors behind them to throw out the light.

Two stoves - one located on the left hand side of the nave near the organ and the other on the right hand side of the nave, heated the church.

The nave was divided into sections for Sunday School classrooms by hanging green curtains on wires.

The roof of the church was cone shaped with an approximately 8ft high cupola. The 800 lbs bell, made in Pennsylvania and shipped to Jerome by rail, was installed when the church was constructed. Not only used for worship, it told of deaths in the community.

It was tolled six times for the death of a woman, nine times for the death of a man.

A Saddle room, built beside the church in the 1800's and used to keep horse equipment in while the owners were in church, and where ladies could change from their riding clothes in to their church clothes, was dismantled in the early 1930's to make room for the construction of Sunday School rooms. In 1934, the project was commenced and the rooms were completed in either 1936 or 1937. During this time the bell was moved on to the roof of the Sunday School building.

In 1933 a rock wall was commenced around the church property, with the rocks being gathered from fields, roads, mountain and wherever available, by the members of the congregation conveying them by horse and wagon. The masonry work was completed on May 5, 1935.

On July 25, 1937, the council gave permission for a baptismal font to be placed by the Light Brigade (the children) into the church.

A furnace was purchased from Sears and Roebuck on September 8, 1940 and installed at a cost of \$590 but proved to be too small, a year later it was replaced by two furnaces, the larger one for the church and the smaller one for the Sunday School.

By the spring of 1940, the Senior Sunday School class, with approximately 25 members, commenced a project initially clearing up debris from the building of the Sunday School rooms but this led, together with help from other members, to excavate a full basement under the church. As funds became available, the entire floor was concreted and new ceiling installed.

At this time a reservoir was dug on the west side of the church, concreted on April 16, 1947 and has a capacity of 18,000 gallons.

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During the years 1951 and 1952 a furnace wall was built and Ladies and men's restrooms were added.

Around 1953 a public address system was installed.

On September 22, 1955 a new electric organ was purchased at a cost of \$2475.00.

On November 13, 1960 it was voted to discontinue evening services. By September 7, 1962 a new art window was installed over the altar and in the same year the entire outside walls and attic of the church were insulated.

In 1966, new pews were installed finished at 4.00 pm New Years Eve, and used for the service the following day. They were purchased for \$3085.59 from Bond Lumber Construction and the old church pews sold at public auction on January 28, 1967.

Chimes were dedicated at Homecoming Services September 10, 1967

Members made a lectern, advent wreath stand and table for the narthex, a lectern for the nave and bulletin boards for the Sunday School rooms.

During August 1970, concrete steps to the north basement door were built at a cost of \$119.70.

A new Sunday School room and library was built in the attic of the church during March and April 1971 at a cost of \$1060.03.

At a special congregational meeting held January 13, 1974 By-Laws and Regulations were adopted for the new St. Paul's cemetery.

During August 1975 the driveway and parking lot was graded and hard surfaced at a cost of \$1355.

Land for a parsonage was purchased in 1984 and actual construction was begun on April 30, 1985. It was completed on October 5, 1985.

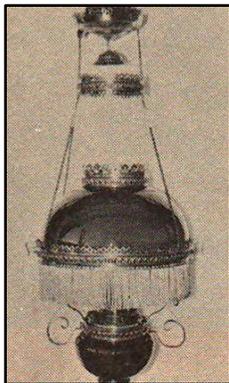
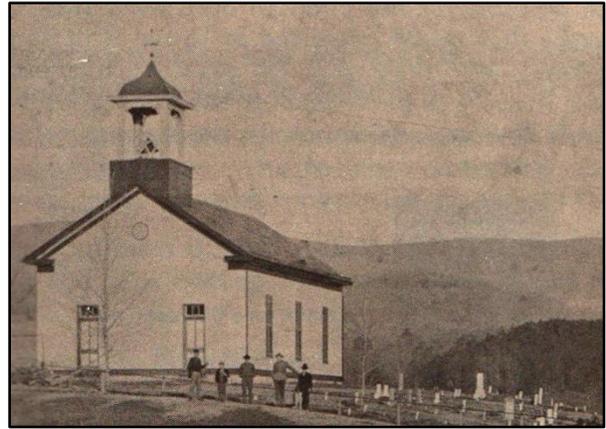
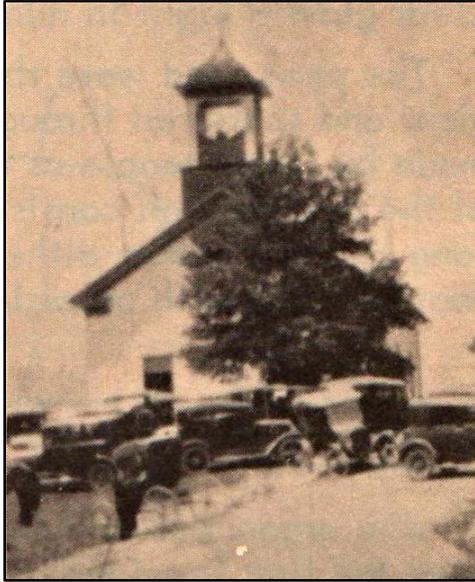
In 1996 it was decided to build additional Sunday School rooms, repair the church roof, recondition tables in the church basement and repair the basement wall due to a water problem. New handicapped accessible bathrooms were added on the nave and Sunday School levels.

In 1998, it was agreed to move the altar from the wall to become a free standing altar.

*Paraphrased by Philip Crown from 150th and 175th Celebration booklets
And edited by Orville L. Smoot, Council Vice-Chair*

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*Kerosene Lamp
used in church*



G. Miller's store and Post Office

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