

Zion Church on Grove St — Maybe cobblestone
HISTORY SHEET
General Information

Name of Structure: Zion Lutheran Church

Address: 60 Grove St (today)
(corner of Stilton and Grove Streets before roads were reconfigured and Stillson was merged with Grove St; the reworked road configuration was named Grove St (ie. no more Stillson St))

Parcel Id: (261400) 106.80-2-5.002

Atlas: 1852: no detail of Rochester city, 1858: detail but buildings unlabeled;
1872: "LUTH. CH." ; 1887 "GER. CH."

When Built/ Mason: Begun 1834, delayed due to lack of funds, dedicated 1838

When Razed: Though unclear, probably in 1851 when new church built to

Why: Accommodate a growing congregation

Original Owner: Lutheran church

Original Use: Lutheran church

Subsequently: Replaced by brick church early on (no longer cobblestone)

Subsequent Use: Church until 1960; HQ of the Jewish War Veterans; apartments today

Photographs: None of cobblestone building

Description: Unknown

B A C K G R O U N D

It cannot be confirmed that this church was a cobblestone structure. If it was, it would have been the only one in the city (metro). Cobblestone buildings were usually built in small clusters in the same area because a mason could only lay 3 or 4 courses at a time before letting the mortar set for a few days before starting back up again. Working on more than one at a time minimized idle time. The nearest cobblestone structures were in an area considered the outskirts of the city located on what is now Culver Rd. Both were built by mason, Alonzo Bradley. This church, however, took four years to build; records cite financial issues. So, if it really was a cobblestone church, as opposed to a stone church, it would have been a challenge finding a cobblestone mason to construct it piecemeal in isolation from other projects.

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Few records exist about the church from this early time period. Although there is no description of this original church structure, it was probably small because records tell that it was replaced to accommodate a growing congregation. The replacement was of brick, and that too was eventually replaced with the structure there today.

Catalyst for this research was Cynthia Howk's email 4/3/2024:

"Click on this 1952 'D & C' article written at the time of the death of Rev. Ernest Heyl, age 80, who was pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, 70 Grove St/corner of Stillson St. for 41 years (1900-'41). <https://democratandchronicle.newspapers.com/image/137747279/?terms=rev%20hey&match=1> ... The current building at 70 Grove St. - former Zion Church/closed 1960 – is of brick construction and dates from the mid-1800s. Here's 1917 photo (<https://mcnygenealogy.com/pictures/3900/pic-4026.htm>). ... The most intriguing item in this 1952 article is citation that Zion Lutheran church, founded 1833 & the city's oldest Lutheran congregation, is described as having originally been a cobblestone building! Note: the original name of this congregation was 'German Evangelical Lutheran Church.' The current building at 70 Grove St. - former Zion Church/closed 1960 – is of brick construction and dates from the mid-1800s. Here's 1917 photo (<https://mcnygenealogy.com/pictures/3900/pic-4026.htm>). After the church closed, the building was the headquarters of the Jewish War Veterans, 1960-'90s. In the 1990s, it was renovated as "Halo Apartments," which it remains, today.

REFERENCES

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1936 - 7886.pdf (10/11/1936)

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201936/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201936%20-%207886.pdf>

"Zion Church's Century Mark To Be Noted

... This church served a group of early settlers who looked to her for special comfort. In a strange country of unfamiliar ways and language, their weekday as well as their religious interests centered more or less about this church. From that time until now when it has numbered musical stars and those promising to rise among the younger parishioners, it has ministered to an older element in German, a young group in English. ...

Records of this, the first Lutheran church, are so scanty that its history is incomplete. There were services here as early as 1831, three years before Rochester became a city. There is a definite account of the Lutheran congregation deciding to erect its own building in 1834,

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which data makes possible the knowledge of the first centennial. The lot on which the first house of worship was erected was where the present one stands, at Stilton and Grove Streets. Some time in May of that year the cornerstone of a cobblestone church was laid. Lack of funds delayed work, but the Synod came to the rescue with a loan. This edifice was dedicated Dec. 14, 1838. ...

In a pamphlet issued for the centennial, the Rev. Walter Krumwiede, minister of Grace Church, has a history of Zion Church. In 1848 the Rev. George J Kempe succeeded the Rev. Mr. Michelfelder. He remained until 1842. While he was serving a new church was built in 1851 to accommodate the growing congregation. ...

The church met a disaster in the great fire of April 13, 1908 that swept through Temple B'rith Kodesh and seriously damaged Zion's edifice as well as other buildings."

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1952 - 8348.pdf (7/20/1952, Pg 4B)

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202024/>

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201949-1970/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202024/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201952/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202024/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201952%20-%208348.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202024/)

Rev. Ernest Heyd, Lutheran, Passes

The Rev. Ernest Heyd, D.D., retired minister who for 45 years was pastor of Zion Lutheran Church died yesterday (July 19, 1952). He was 80.

Dr. Heyd was born in Germany but came to the United States as a child. After attending a religious institute in New York City, he came to Rochester to study at Wagner College, which has since relocated in Staten Island. He later received his doctorate in divinity at Mt. Airy Seminary. Dr. Heyd became and remained for more than 40 years a trustee of Wagner College.

While studying Rochester for the ministry, he attended Zion Lutheran Church, of which he later became the eighth pastor since it was founded as a cobblestone church in 1833. He served as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Albany and of First Lutheran Church in Lyons before coming to Zion Church in 1900. During his years here, he was for a time president of the New York Conference of the United Lutheran Synod. He participated in religious radio work and was extremely active in civic work as well as in his ministry. Dr. Heyd, who died at his residence, 62 Eastland Ave., Brighton retired in 1945.

He is survived by his wife, Rose and two sisters, the Misses Amalia and Mathilda Heyd of Newark. Services will be held at 2 PM Tuesday in Zion Lutheran Church, Grove St. and Stilton St. Burial will be in Riverside Cemetery."

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Fire:

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1964 a - 6707.pdf (4/12/1964)

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2024/>

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201949-1970/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2024/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201964/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2024/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201964%20a%20-%206707.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2024/)

"Two April 13ths: Eastman's Patent ... Big Fire, By Arch Merrill

Tomorrow, April 13, will be the anniversary of two dissimilar important events in Rochester history. One bolsters the superstitious that 13 is an unlucky number. The other contradicts it.

On April 13, 1880, George Eastman obtained a United States patent on his photographic dry plate process. It was a lucky date for him and for Rochester.

On April 13, 1909 a gale-spread half million dollar fire swept a large section of downtown Rochester. ...

On the afternoon of April 13, 1909, which a 40-mile-an-hour wind raked Rochester, fire was discovered in the Kenning Building at the northeast corner of Main and Gibbs Streets. The gale spread the sparks over 13 streets to the northward. New fires kept springing up. Soon the blaze was out of control. It destroyed Temple B'rith Kodesh in Gibbs Street and the First Reformed Church at Harrison and Oregon Streets. It **severely damaged the Lutheran Zion Church at Grove and Stilton** but was confined to the roof of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church in Grove Street. ..."

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1909 a (628).pdf (4/14/1909, pg 13) lengthy article

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1909 a (629).pdf (4/14/1909, pg 14)

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle/>

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909%20a%20%28628%29.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909%20a%20%28628%29.pdf)

and continued on

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle/>

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909%20a%20%28629%29.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201909%20a%20%28629%29.pdf)

On page 14: "Fire Starts in Selden Building, Temple in Ruins ... A long row of apartment houses, owned by Frank A. and Herbert L. Ward, at Nos. 3 to 25 Grove place was attacked by fire before any provision had been made for protecting them ... Synagogue and Hall Burn. From that time on the fire in the Seldon building entered but little into the calculations of the firemen, for a blaze had been discovered in the tall tower of Berith Kodesh Temple. The tiny spark which had flown from the big fire rapidly grew to a red conflagration and the entire eastern part of the synagogue was ablaze before sufficient water could be brought to bear on the fire. At 12:15 the eastern part of the tower fell into the street ... Some stiff work was

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necessary to keep the flames from engulfing the building First German Lutheran Evangelical Zion Church. The roof of the church was ablaze several times, but a bucket brigade saved the church. ...

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1961 a - 1548.pdf (Sun, 6/18/1961)

[https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2024/](https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%202024/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201949-1970/](https://fultonhistory.com/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201949-1970/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201961/](https://fultonhistory.com/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201961/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201961%20a%20-%201548.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201961%20a%20-%201548.pdf)

"Merged Churches Celebrate Today

... Zion Church was the first Lutheran congregation in the city. After meeting for three years, a group of Lutherans and Reformed worshippers formally organized their congregation in 1836 at Grove and Stilton streets. ..."

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1912 - 3540.pdf (5/16/1912)

<https://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%20205/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle/>

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201912/](https://fultonhistory.com/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201912/)

[Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201912%20-%203540.pdf](https://fultonhistory.com/Rochester%20NY%20Democrat%20Chronicle%201912%20-%203540.pdf)

"PROMINENT MEN OF RACE TO BE HONORED - In Anniversary Celebration of Zion Church. mentions nothing about the church (just its name in the title) but nice article about celebrating colored soldiers and Frederick Douglass ..."

Rochester NY Democrat Chronicle 1899 - 5835.pdf (11/5/1899)

"A MINISTER ENJOINED. More Trouble in the German Lutheran Zion Church — A resumption of the disaffection which sprung up in the German Lutheran Zion Church on Grove street several years ago was publicly manifested yesterday, when a court injunction was obtained by some of the church officials to restrain the pastor, Rev. Ernest Hartman, from occupying the pulpit or performing further official duties as pastor of the congregation. ..."