

From *The Romance of Lutheranism in California*
by Richard T. Du Brau

(Excerpted 1 Mar 2001 by Ruth Tietjen Councell)

(pg. 72)

Book 2, Chapter 1. Twins of the Big Boom

Unlike the North, where for almost 20 years the work of the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod had been carried on by one single congregation, the work in Southern California began simultaneously with two Lutheran groups. The two congregations which soon sprang from the missionary beginnings of the 80s can well be considered twins. One spiritual father was instrumental in getting the Gospel ministry to both of them. One might add that they even had the same spiritual "grandfather".

It all began in San Francisco once more. In *Der Lutheraner* of March 1, 1880, appeared the following "Change of Address": M.L. Wyneken, 953 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif.-- This was the "grandfather's" address, viz. the parsonage of J. M. Buehler. Martin L. Wyneken, brother-in-law of Buehler, was one of the many who came to improve their health in California. He had resigned his pastorate in Cincinnati, Ohio, because of a disabling throat condition, and J. M. Buehler advised him to try the milder climate of Los Angeles. There is little doubt, as subsequent events were to prove, that Father Buehler sent Wyneken south on an exploratory trip as a means to improve his health as well as to build the Kingdom. That Wyneken did not remain glued to one spot in the City of the Angels is evident from his next change of address, as reported in *Der Lutheraner* of Dec. 15, 1880: "Rev. M.L. Wyneken, Box 949, Los Angeles, Calif."

Despite his physical ailments, Wyneken was well aware of the important developments taking place in Southern California, especially in and around Los Angeles. Not only did he gather some Lutherans about him to hold reading services and family devotions, but he also interested himself in real estate developments on some lands of the famous Santa Anita Ranch. He planned to settle a colony of Lutherans at Sierra Madre, and for this purpose he, too, became a press agent for the great Southland. He published several descriptive articles in Milwaukee and St. Louis papers. As a result, in 1881 and 1882, a few Lutheran families from St. Louis took up residence in Los Angeles and noticeably strengthened the missionary efforts of M.L. Wyneken.

His efforts coincided with the final acquisition of the beautiful Rancho Santa Anita by Elias J. "Lucky" Baldwin of Virginia City and San Francisco. Baldwin's fabulous profits from the rich Ophir mine in the Comstock lode enabled him to purchase this vast estate of 13,319

(pg. 73)

acres for a mere \$200,000. But Baldwin would have gasped had he known that Don Perfecto Hugo Reid, the original grantee, sold these holdings for \$ 2,700 dollars in 1847.

Baldwin was determined to outdo Leland Stanford and James Flood, whose magnificent estates he had seen down the peninsula from San Francisco, and outdo them he did! Although he was willing to sell land to the east for Arcadia and Monrovia, and he did

actually sell a portion of the dreamily beautiful ranch for what is now Sierra Madre, "There is not money in all the world to buy the central portion of the Santa Anita from me.", he often said when real estate "boomers" were after his homestead.

It was in the Sierra Madre foothills that Rev. M.L. Wyneken wanted to settle his Lutherans, but they were slow to move and characteristically cautious, so that the plans did not materialize. It did get Wyneken around, however, for he found Lutheran settlers on the subdivided lands of the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, particularly the present town of Orange, then also part of Los Angeles county. Although his physical condition did not allow him to provide this group with regular services, he nevertheless visited them and encouraged them to seek eventual congregational organization.

Thus it happened when our Lutheran work in southern California began, that Martin L. Wyneken became the pioneer in the South and gave impetus to the simultaneous establishment of two Lutheran congregations, St. John's in Orange, and Trinity in Los Angeles.

Both mother congregations began to meet for prayer and praise in 1881, both organized in 1882. Trinity became a member of the Lutheran "Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other states in 1886, and in 1887, St. John's followed the example of her sister church in Los Angeles.

The rise and progress of the Lutheran Church in the South of the Golden State takes its course, then from Trinity Church in Los Angeles and from St. John's in Orange.

Chapter 2.

From Leck's Hall to the Spires of Old Trinity

Los Angeles had safely weathered the transition decades. Her unfenced grazing lands were being platted into business lots and residential additions. The old cattle paths were being widened into boulevards. Rodeo grounds had not yet given place to airports, but Matthew Keller's 137-acre vineyard became downtown commercial blocks. The Southern Pacific railroad entered the city late in 1876, and by 1880 the U. S. Census credited Los Angeles with 11,183 inhabitants.

That was the year when Martin L. Wyneken came to Los Angeles. He had not been in the southern capital for a year when the California Concordia Conference met in San Francisco on Oct. 18, 1881. At this meeting Chairman Buehler reported that he had received a letter from his brother-in-law Wyneken in Los Angeles, who wrote that many people in Southern California in and around Los Angeles were urgently and sincerely requesting to be served with Word and Sacrament. Buehler remarked that because of the great distance of over 400 miles it was impossible to provide regular services from San Francisco, and the general mission board in St. Louis should be petitioned to send a special missionary to the South.

(pg. 74)

In the interim the ailing Wyneken continued to serve as best his health would allow. He conducted services in his home and conscientiously kept calling at the homes of prospects. Herein he received great help from a Los Angeles Lutheran, Julius Schmidt, who day by day drove Wyneken from house to house in his buggy. When Schmidt was not available, the "retired" pastor had the services of Los Angeles' first rail transit

line, "The Spring & West Sixth Street Railroad", which was operating 11 miles of track within the city, from the Plaza to Sixth Street and out to Lincoln Heights/. This was a horse-drawn streetcar with open sides and it must have required a certain fortitude on the part of the passengers to be trundled over the dusty streets of that time.

God's strength is mighty in the weak. In the spring of 1882 a bronchial affliction compelled J.M. Buehler to rest and recuperate for some six weeks in the milder climate of Los Angeles. He did not find much rest, since he would recuperate by soon taking charge of the young mission. The group rented Leck's Hall on Main street between Second and Third for public worship on Sundays. This Hall was a Lutheran landmark in Los Angeles until it was torn down in Nov. 1958. Here Buehler held the first public service of our church on Sunday, May 28, 1882. He reported his impression at length in a letter to the northern conference, which met in Oakland early in June:

"Last Sunday we had our first service here. Since Los Angeles does not enjoy a good reputation with regard to church life and religion, I did not expect too much of an attendance. But we had notices in all the local newspapers and had notified all friends and acquaintances. Thus to our great joy a not inconsiderable congregation came together. There were 52 adults and some children. It appeared that the people were greatly pleased at the prospect of having services for several Sundays more. In the service itself there were indeed fine evidences of true devotion. However, I shall not become too optimistic but shall rather wait to see how the attendance turns out on the Sundays to follow. "

Buehler and Wyneken were not disappointed. The services were well attended and appreciated. On the fifth Sunday, June 2, a short meeting was held after the service, wherein it was decided to meet that same afternoon for purposes of organizing a congregation.

Notes and References pages 265-266

Page 72

M. L. Wyneken shared P.O. Box 949 with his brother-in-law, Rev. H. G. Craemer, who had resigned his charge in Zanesville, Ohio, likewise because of ill health. Apparently the M. L. Wynekens and H. G. Craemers came out to California together, stopping at Buehler's in San Francisco along the way. Craemer had married Sophie Wyneken, the sister of Louise Buehler and Martin Wyneken.

Craemer's health would not permit him to engage in any work, let alone attempt to join Wyneken in his own feeble missionary endeavors. H. G. Craemer did not enjoy the health-giving climate of Southern California long; for he departed this life on October 28, 1881, in Los Angeles. He was survived by his widow and three minor children. This greatly added to M. L. Wyneken's responsibilities, and he was often hard put to augment his already invisible means of support. It is thought that his Sierra Madre plans were an attempt to cash in on the real estate boom of the Eighties.

The *Proceedings* of the Central District of 1879 report: Pastor M. Wyneken had to resign his charge in Cincinnati because of ill health. (President's report)

Page 74

Miss Emma Wyneken at the age of 78, in her home at 733 Palmyra Street, Orange, California, recalled the following about the Los Angeles pioneer Martin L. Wyneken:

"Brother Martin did missionary work in Los Angeles, for his health had caused him to give up his Cincinnati congregation previously. In Los Angeles he recovered his voice temporarily. We then rented a house with him there until we built our new home. Los Angeles had 35,000 inhabitants at that time, in 1882... Brother Martin went canvassing, which resulted in his having services in his home; later he rented a hall and opened a Sunday school... I assisted in conducting Sunday school for him. We had between eighty and ninety pupils.

" In 1881 Rev. J. Kogler came to Los Angeles because of his health, and my brother Martin prevailed upon him to settle in Orange, California...

"Brother Martin passed away in 1884 and in 1887, after selling our home we had built in Los Angeles, we went back to San Francisco."

Page 74, cont.

Mr. J. M. Buehler was Emma Wyneken's sister.

M.L. Wyneken. *The Lutherischer Botschafter*, Vol. 1, p. 48 (November 1884), brings the obituary of the pioneer Wyneken in Los Angeles. Translation by R. T. Du Brau as follows:

Soon after sending out our last issue we received the sad news which has brought mourning also to our circles. Martin Wyneken, c. r. m., in Los Angeles Co., an exceptionally gifted, and in his day, an ardent and eager servant of God, the oldest son of the highly esteemed former president Wyneken who died here [in San Francisco] after six years of heavy suffering was delivered from all evil and a blessed death on October 19 and translated to the Church Triumphant.

The departed, a brother-in-law of Pastor Buehler, resided in San Francisco a few years ago, where his frank, congenial temperament and his serious illness aroused the loving sympathy of his fellow Christians in a high degree.

Despite his frailty he was active in missionary work in Los Angeles, and his efforts have contributed in part to the fact that there is an Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Los Angeles today. His long-expected but nevertheless sudden departure is mourned by a young widow and four minor children and many near relatives [among them four brothers and four sisters] as well as many intimate friends.

The funeral took place on October 22. Pastor Runkel* afforded comfort with the words, "Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth"; Pastor Buehler spoke in English, and Pastor Kogler* had the service in the house and at the graveside. Pastor Dietrichson also was present. Our former missionary L. Wagner expressed his condolences in the following poem. [Here follow three stanzas of a German lyric.]

[J. H. Th[eiss]

Interment was made in Evergreen Cemetery, Euclid Heights, Los Angeles. Near a large Cypress tree are three flat headstones; on the right: "Rev. M. L. Wyneken, 1844 to 1884"; in the center, " Rev. Arthur M. Wyneken, son, 1881-1938"; and on the left, " Clara Wyneken (nee Biltz). 1851-1936." President G. H. Smukal guided the author to the unassuming spot, the simplicity of which gives little hint as to the historical romance there interred.

* Pastor Runkel was the first permanent pastor at Trinity, Los Angeles, and Kogler was the first permanent pastor at St. John's, Orange.

RTC

Information from pages 276, 277:

Pastors of
The California and Oregon district 1887-1898
The California and Nevada District 1898-1930
The California and Nevada District 1930-1958

Wyneken, Arthur M.
Wyneken, Gerald E.
Wyneken, Martin L. ,Sr.
Wyneken, Martin L.

Southern California District Pastors entered since 1930

Wyneken, Lawrence