

## Our Eastside Hill Heritage | Part 4: The German Lutherans

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The linguistic and cultural heritage of immigrants created settlement patterns in large and small cities alike. The first German immigrants who came to Eau Claire began to cluster in Wards 6 and 8. The Germans living in the 6th and 8th Wards, both on the northeast side of the city, were predominantly Roman Catholic. The 2nd Ward, on the southeast side of town, is in our neighborhood, located on the east hill overlooking the downtown area. This area developed somewhat later than the 6th and 8th Wards and became home to most of the German Lutherans in Eau Claire.



In 1874, a German congregation organized St. John's German Lutheran Church. The original building, located on Galloway Street on the near northeast side, was a small wooden structure. During the next several years, the congregation built a parsonage and purchased a cemetery. In 1881, expansion plans led the congregation to purchase property on South Dewey Street, just below the east side hill. The planned new church became a reality in 1883. The Eau Claire Free Press observed, "The force of carpenters engaged in erecting the new German Lutheran Church is making remarkably rapid progress in their work...The congregation will have a fine place of worship and one that will reflect much credit and taste on the part of the congregation."

While the German Lutherans were busy expanding their parish, the German Catholics on the north side were doing the same thing. St Peter's Mission Church, the only Roman Catholic church in Eau Claire, was located in the heart of a German neighborhood, near two German breweries, a beer garden, and the Germania Hall Building.

The mission moved to the west side of the Chippewa River in 1865 and became St Patrick's Catholic Church. For ten years the north side German Catholics dealt with the problem of going down a large hill and crossing two rivers to attend church. Finally, in 1875, 65 German speaking families formed a separate parish of their own. The location chosen for the new church, to be named Sacred Heart German Catholic Church, was on North Dewey Street, on top of the north side hill, above the breweries, beer garden, and former location of the mission. The location would be a convenient one for all Germans living in Wards 6 and 8. The new church dedicated their altar in December 1883. So, whether they were Catholic or Lutheran, the entire German population of Eau Claire was by that time clustered on the west side of the city, because that was where they worshiped.