

FRIEDRICH AUGUST CRÄMER

Pioneer Missionary, Pastor and Professor

BORN: **MAY 26, 1812** Bavaria, Germany

DIED: **MAY 3, 1891** Springfield, Ill.

SOMETIMES PEOPLE SEEM TOO BRIGHT for their own good. Such was the case of Friedrich August Crämer, a key figure in the early history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Raised in a Lutheran home, Crämer distinguished himself for his intellectual capability as a student at Erlangen University. He was also known for his political interests, especially regarding the matter of German unification. After being arrested for his participation in an attempted insurrection to force the issue of unification, Crämer found himself imprisoned from 1833–1839. Reflecting on his life’s purpose, he became a deeply committed Christian with a fervent desire to serve as a pastor. However, having

a criminal record as an insurrectionist disqualified him from service in Germany, so it appeared that door might be closed.

As a result, Crämer pursued an advanced degree in philology and discovered that he had a notable facility with languages. Thus, when Pastor Wilhelm Löhe sought a candidate who could serve as pastor to a group of Franconians immigrating to the United States and who could also engage the Native Americans of Michigan in their native language, he found his man in Crämer. This allowed Crämer to use his gifts with languages in concert with his desire to proclaim Christ’s Gospel as a pastor. His hopes came together with God’s plan.

Crämer’s group arrived in the United States in the summer of 1845 and, having made their way to Michigan’s Saginaw Valley, established the first of four Franconian colonies, Frankenmuth (“courage of the Franconians”), with its attendant congregation, Saint Lorenz (which continues as an active congregation today).

Crämer’s many gifts suggested him as a candidate for a seminary professorship, and in 1850 he joined the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary in

Fort Wayne. He helped shepherd the institution’s moves first to St. Louis in 1861 and then again to Springfield, Ill., in 1875. In all of these settings he distinguished himself as an informed and committed Lutheran who wedded his vigorous confession with a heart for missions.

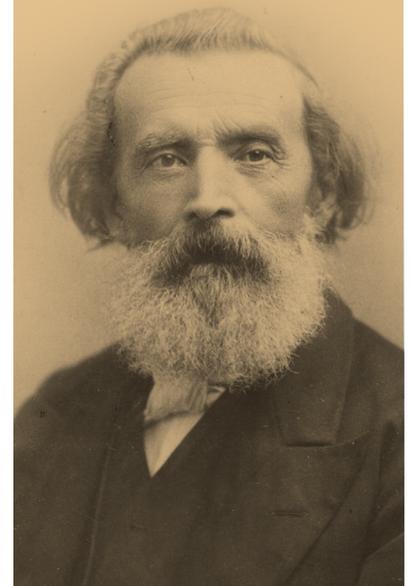
After Crämer died on May 3, 1891, his funeral was reported to have been the second largest held in Springfield in the nineteenth century — second only to Abraham Lincoln’s.

A tablet bearing Crämer’s image was displayed for years on the Springfield campus. It captured the variety of gifts that God enabled August Crämer to use in thankful service for the grace he had received: “Lutheran scholar, pioneer missionary among the Indians, pastor, professor and president of this institution for 41 years — a man of God, who by his rugged faith, his burning zeal in the performance of his duties, his labor and his self-denial gave evidence of the love of Christ that was in him, and whom we greatly honor as the father of the Seminary.”

For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit lcms.org/175.

DISCOVER MORE

Lawrence R. Rast Jr., “Friedrich August Crämer: Faithful Servant in Christ’s Church,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (January 2000): 39–60.



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– 175 YEARS –



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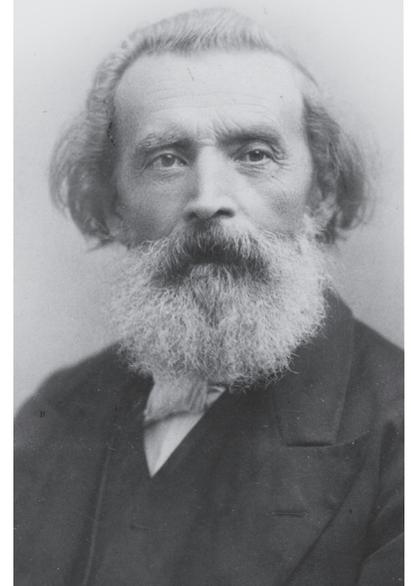
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