

St. Paul United

Church of Christ

History of our First

Church

1839 - 1860



First church building 1839

This drawing is an accurate representation of our first church building.
The Archives has no photo of this building.

Dedication

The co-authors of this book wish to dedicate it to the courageous families who left their homes, friends and loved ones in Germany to come to America. This was a dangerous trip in an overcrowded ship without adequate food, water or medical attention. Roger and I thank them for their bravery and steadfast dedication. They battled an unknown frontier with unforeseen consequences to enhance their lives and those of their

descendants. St. Paul United Church of Christ located at 115 West B Street in Belleville, Illinois humbly continues the traditions of our ancestors.

Several members have helped organize St. Paul's history. Some of those names recorded in our plethora of history pages are listed alphabetically:

*Jo Ann Elmore
Roger Henke
Rose Hoy
Alice Jerome
Sandra Kuehn
Arkell Kunze
Blaine Spies
Sandra Wagner*

No one was intentionally omitted from this list. The archives are not fully organized. These are the names we have discovered as of this compilation. With God's never-ending Grace, and our members' patience, we will continue the task we tirelessly work to fulfill.

In Service to God,
Your Archivists,
Jo Ann Elmore and Roger Henke

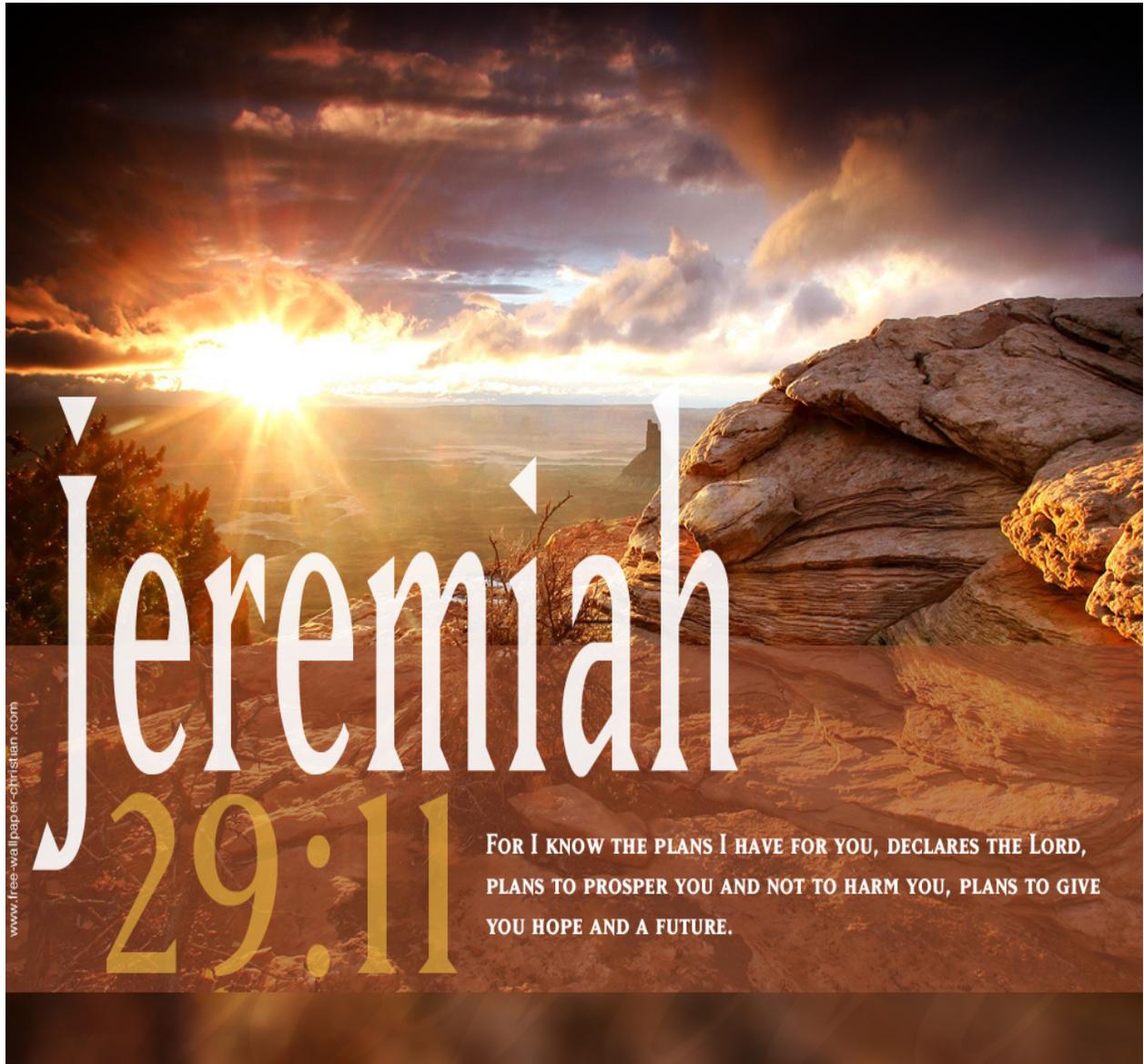
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The history of this congregation is traced back to the year 1839. Political strife occurred throughout Germany early that decade. Mob trouble-spots were prevalent. The town of Hambach in der Pflasz, Germany, was the location of a riot led by the German people over the tyrannical measures of the Bavarian administration.

That fact, and an attempt by a democratically-minded population to capture the Konstable Wache, an armory in the city of Frankfurt-on-the-Main,

stimulated many political renegades to leave the country and came to America. Those families began arriving in Belleville during that year and the German population began to increase. As is the case for any culture, they wanted to establish a church for their traditions and background. Several of them began to organize efforts to do just that.

Please join us as we travel to Compton Hill, Illinois on March 17, 1839. We bring with us a travelling preacher who would soon become the first preacher of our very own church. You will discover our beloved church has worn many hats and had several names.



First Preacher to Compton Hill

Belleville, originally known as Compton Hill, was twenty-five years old in 1839.

Johann Jacob Riess was its first itinerant preacher.



Johann Jacob Riess

Riess was ordained a minister by Deacon Hitzig on May 13, 1835 at Loerach, Baden. The Germans in America requested ordained ministers for their churches in America. Riess was sent to America by The Basel (Switzerland) Mission Society. On October 11, 1835, Riess arrived at New York City on the ship Isabella. He was the first ordained preacher of the Evangelical Synod to set foot on American soil. He arrived in St. Clair County and took up residence in Millstadt where he established Zion Church.

Riess held a church service in German and gave communion for a public crowd at a site on second street, possibly the site of the St. Clair County Court House on March 17, 1839. German families of the Protestant religion who attended the service called Riess to be their preacher later the same day. Beginning Easter 1839 to New Year's Day 1840, Riess would be paid seventy-five dollars every three months.

An entry from Riess' diary states, "*A friendly request was made of me that I preach the Word of God in Belleville, which I joyously did on the 17th of March at the Belleville Court House. The place was filled with Americans, Germans, and Negroes. I preached from the text Romans 1:18, frankly and freely as a witness of Him whom the world-wise despise, Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the world, and informed the assembled people, that I would grant their request, in case they desired my services as a future preacher, only on the condition that I be permitted to peacefully preach the Word of Jesus Christ, who was crucified for us sinners. I was unanimously elected preacher until the next new year. Henceforth, I preached every 14 days – in the forenoon at Turkey Hill, and in the afternoon in Belleville in the Methodist Church there.*" He held the first congregational meeting of this church that day.

One of the actions he performed was appointing the first president of the trustees of the congregation. Selected was Adolph Hildebrandt, a gold smith by trade. The first secretary was August Hassel, a lawyer and a graduate of the University of Munich. These men were among those immigrants who had been forced to come to this country because of their political sympathies in Germany.

During the meeting, Riess asked that a name be chosen for the new church. Hildebrandt replied, *“Reverend Riess and Members: Remembering that we all, like Abraham, had to leave our home country, and our kindred, and our father’s house, and come to a strange land; and remembering that we came to America as fugitives to seek liberty and freedom of thought here and true democracy and a government least oppressive; remembering that our troubled exodus really had its beginning in that political meeting at St. Paul’s Church of Frankfurt on the Main; remembering all that, I say there can be only one name given to our new church, in memory of those who fought with us, and suffered and died for freedom’s cause. And that one and only name, proper for our church is St. Paul’s Church, and as St. Paul’s Church be it known forever.”*

Our church was the first German Protestant church in southern Illinois. It was known simply as the Freie Protestantische Gemeinde in Belleville or the Free Protestant Church. After that, services were held each Sunday at the Court House and later at the Methodist Meeting House in Belleville.

From the church records, the names of our church founders are:

Adolf Hildebrandt	Adam Sattler	Ludwig Huff
August Hassel	Johann Kaysing	Heinrich Haublein
Christian Kaysing	Conrad Westermann	Jacob Krumm
Jacob Espenschied	Heinrich Kaysing	Carol Born
Emil Meisser	William Schoebel	Justinus Renth
Christoph Vierheller	Friederich Schoellkopf	Georg Brenner
Carl Daum	Christian Lehner	Carl Graf
Christian Scholl	Johannes Mueller	Adam Keller
Georg Eisenmeyer	Jacob Knoebel, Sr.	Phillip Merz
August Conradi	August Stolberg	Johannes Winter
Heinrich Moehlmann	Georg M. Roeder	Bernard Liebig
Karl Knoebel	H. Schleth	Carl Merck
George Joachim Merz	Georg Heberer Eckert	Georg Hehe

On April 7, 1839, after services in the Methodist Meeting House, the first administrator election was held with these results:

First trustee, president and scribe - Adolph Hildenbrandt

Second trustee, vice president - Conrad Westermann

Third trustee, vice president and treasurer - Jacob Kaysing

Subscription (tithes) Collectors - Christian Scholl, Jacob Espenschied, and Georg Brenner.

Other elected members were Emil Meisser and Jacob Knoebel, Sr. who refused the office and was replaced by August Hassel.

During the meeting, the congregation expressed a desire in their hearts for their own pastor, increase efforts to gather a congregation in Belleville, and to build a church. President Adolf Hilderbrandt was recorded saying, *“Every immigrant to a strange country has to battle at the beginning with such a mass of needs that he has no time or room for further thought. Only when he has time for rest, has organized his home and hearth, has begun to get a grasp of the conditions in the new country as well as its foreign language and when his circumstances appear better, does he emerge from his business confusion and is prepared again to give himself over to nobler thoughts. He who was accustomed earlier to religiosity will then long again for an organized church and church services; particularly for a church, in which his mother tongue is spoken.”*

That occurred for the Germans of Belleville and the surrounding area. They felt the need for a German church as well as a real school. They knew that the instruction of youth as well as a church-supported religious practice would be advantageous to nations and its people as well as small or large societies for individuals. The preservation of the common good, peace and rest among all mankind was needed and welcomed.

To allow the idea to come to life as soon as possible, several members made the attempt to see if enough money could be gathered through pledges. The first goal to be reached was the preacher's salary. The next goal would be to have enough funds for the construction of their church. This attempt was successful. The small congregation had collected ninety-seven dollars from twenty-seven donors. There was certain hope the church could raise at least that much in the future from patrons who

promised funds. It was also decided at this meeting to order hymn books from Philadelphia and to inquire about a site to build a church. But first they needed a constitution.

Our church's first constitution was adopted on April 13, 1839. It states that a board of trustees of seven members be elected to transact the business of the congregation, which was named the **Church Congregation of Belleville** although Reverend Riess had said the Belleville church should be named St. Paul's after the church in Germany. The board elected a first trustee, second trustee, third trustee, and three other trustees to collect delinquent moneys.

Duties of the **first trustee** are to receive all moneys from the collectors, issue a receipt for same, and the collector to turn this receipt over to the second or third trustee to preserve same for the annual audit of the books. The first trustee is obligated to dutifully keep all said moneys, and under no circumstances, be permitted to use same for private purposes, so that the same can be produced at a moment's notice. He is responsible for such moneys and only if he is fired can he be released from his obligation. The minister is to apply to him for his salary. He shall also be the scribe for the board of trustees.

The duties of the **second trustee** was to preserve all receipts issued by the first trustee, and in the latter's absence to receive all moneys, turning them over to the first trustee upon his return to his home.

The **collectors** of the board shall collect all moneys and turn same over to the first trustee, whose receipt shall be turned over to the second or third trustee. They shall have charge of the subscription lists and give notice to the membership of any propositions or proposals to the congregation. *Editor's note: the quorum was four.*

The traveling expenses of the minister are to be paid by the first trustee, but it is assumed that the reverend will make the home of Mr. Westermann his headquarters.

Reiss traveled by horse. During the week, he would minister everywhere plus teach confirmation classes. During the summer of 1839, Riess experienced a total physical breakdown from the tremendous heat and exhausting schedule he endured. For seven weeks, he lay between life and

death with fever and delirium. Again, these words are taken from his diary, *"The many duties of my profession and the hardships endured in horseback riding to and from my charges, combined with the confirmation instruction in both congregations, gradually exhausted my strength. In the beginning of May, I became very ill with an intestinal ailment, which eventually caused delirium. After several weeks of severe sickness, I again became able, with the aid of the Lord, to take charge of my pastorates, although still very weak."*

Later, church records report Riess was once again ill. The condition completely stopped him from being able to minister or be a teacher. These circumstances, according to the church constitution, forced the congregation to appoint a committee to receive his resignation.

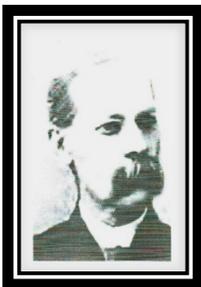
Riess closed his connections with Belleville October 9, 1839. The following short paragraph was taken from his diary. *"Preacher William Flickinger took over my congregations in Belleville and Turkey Hill."*

Riess continued to service as pastor at various locations. After Riess moved to St. Louis, Missouri, in October 1846, he became pastor of Deutsch-Evangelischen Gemeninde. He served God and congregations until his death July 8, 1855 at the age of forty-four years.

He is buried at St. Johns Cemetery in Bellefontaine Neighbors, St. Louis, Missouri, where, in September 1853, he accepted the call to be their pastor in the newly-formed St. John Evangelical Church. It was later called St. John United Church of Christ.

Calling of our Second Preacher

The church congregation appointed Wilhelm Flickinger to be the first resident preacher and school teacher on August 1, 1839. He was paid fifty dollars for his work from September 1, 1839 to January 1, 1840.



Wilhelm (William) Flickinger

Flickinger was born April 7, 1808 in Zweibrucken Rheinbavaria. He graduated with a degree in theology from the University of Erlangen in Germany. Flickinger, like many other Germans, was forcefully encouraged to leave his homeland because his political viewpoint was in support of the first democratic government movement in Germany. He immigrated to America arriving in St. Clair County in the early 1800s.

On September 1, 1839, the congregation decided to begin construction of our first church with a start date of September 7, 1839. Land was sold to the trustees for Two Hundred Dollars by Theodore Krafft, a resident of Belleville who later became the first mayor of Belleville.

Mr. Krafft offered to sell land to the congregation April 20, 1839. The indenture was made December 13, 1839 and recorded under the names of the trustees. The land purchased was Lot One Hundred Seventy-Four of the Flanagan and Krafft Addition.

We have included a copy of this deed and it's transcription on the next page. There is a copy on file at the St. Clair County Recorder of Deeds Office at the County Courthouse along with the transcription for easier reading.

This Indenture made this 13th day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight hundred and thirty nine between Theodore J. Krafft and Mary Elizabeth his wife, and John Flanagan and Frances his wife of the first part and J. Hildenbrandt, C. Westermann, Jacob Kaysing, Geo. Brenner, Christian Schott, E. Meisser, Jacob Espenschied, trustees for the German protestant church in Belleville of the second part with the said party of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of two hundred dollars the receipt where it is hereby recorded in this ledger, do hereby grant, bargain, sell, convey and confirm unto the said party of the second part for the use by the German protestant church in Belleville Lot Number one hundred and seventy four (174) in the second Addition to Belleville as laid out by survey for John Flanagan and Theo. F. Krafft and recorded in the office at Belleville the said Lot to be used for the purpose of erecting a building thereon, which building is to be used as a meeting house and a school house for the said German protestant church, together with all and above thereunto belonging to have and to hold the above described premises unto the said party of the second part, and the said party of the first part, the aforesaid premises unto the said party of the second part against the claim or claims of all and every person whomsoever do and will warrant and forever defend by the said party of the first part hereunto set their hands and seals, the day and year above written.

Signed and sealed in presence of

Theodore J. Krafft (Signature)
 Mary Elizabeth Krafft (Signature)
 John Flanagan (Signature)
 Frances Flanagan (Signature)

This indenture made this 13th day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty- nine between Theodore J. Krafft and Mary Elizabeth, his wife, and John Flanagan and Frances, his wife of the first part and J. Hildenbrandt, C. Westermann, Jacob Kaysing, Geo. Brenner, Christian Schott, E. Meisser, Jacob Espenschied, trustees for the German protestant church in Belleville of the second part with the said party of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of two hundred dollars the receipt where it is hereby recorded in this ledger, do hereby grant, bargain, sell, convey, and confirm unto the said party of the second part for the use by the German protestant church in Belleville, Lot Number one hundred and seventy four (174) in the Second Addition to Belleville as laid out by survey for John Flanagan and Theo F. Krafft and recorded in the office at Belleville the said Lot to be used for the purpose of erecting a building thereon, which building is to be used as a meeting house and a schoolhouse for the said German protestant church, together with all and above thereunto belonging to have and to hold the above described promised unto the said party of the second part and the said party of the first party ,the aforesaid premises unto the said party of the second part against the claim or claims of all and every person whomsoever do and will warrant and forever defend by the

promised writings where of the said party of the first party have hereunto set their hands and seals, the day and year above written.

Signed and dated in presence of

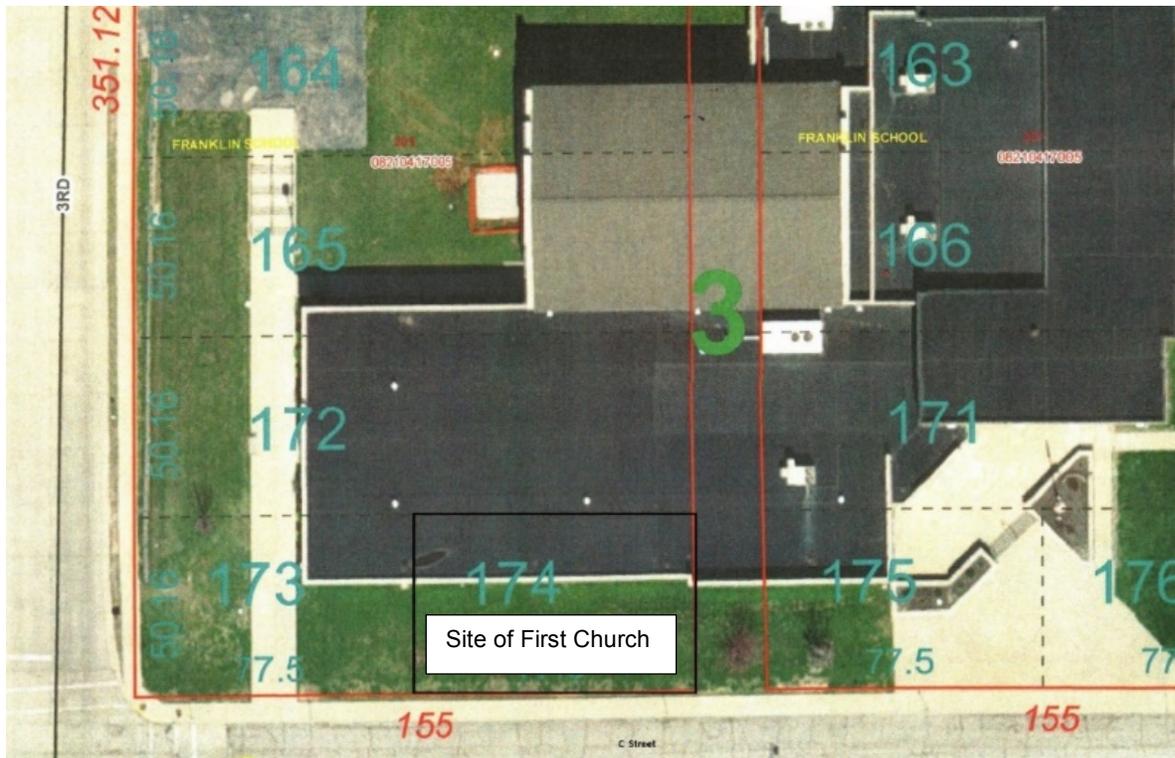
Theod. J. Krafft (Notary seal)

Mary E. Krafft (Notary seal)

John Flanagan (Notary seal)

Frances Flanagan (Notary seal)

The lot measured 50.16 feet wide by 77.5 feet long and included a hill. The church was built on the summit of that hill. Here is the current record of the location of Lot One Hundred Seventy-Four. It is from the Mapping and Platte Office at the Courthouse.



Located on the site of the present Franklin School, the building was 25 feet wide and 50 feet long. A carpenter and his apprentice by the name of Kirkpatrick and Edwin Abend, constructed the building 'without chairs, pulpit, window glass, and hardware (lock work)' for four hundred thirteen dollars.

Services were held even though the building was unfinished. There was no foundation or flooring. The walls were bare and unfinished. There was no stove to spread some cheer and warmth. The little wooden building was dedicated before winter, but the hymnals did not arrive until months later.

Church services were held every Sunday and school during the week. Even without being finished and without heat that first winter, eagerness to attend was constant. This shell of a building was used by Protestants and Catholics for their devotions, including the children of both religions who received their instructions there. There were more firsts for this little building. It was the home of the first singing society, The Saegernbund. The first city library found its home here during the pastorate of Alexis Dony. This was, indeed, the gathering place for the German community of Belleville.

Our church, along with the city, have placed a plaque on the grounds of Franklin School identifying the location of our first church. Here is the plaque at its location:





The following information, as well as the above plaque pictures, were provided by Judi Keplar, a member of our church.

“I spoke with Jon Boente (Principal at Franklin) about the missing plaque. I can assure you that all is well.

Franklin designed a 'Mary McCugh Memorial Space' on the back of the building (facing the gravel parking lot). Upon doing some research, the principal learned that the area pegged for the memorial space was also a more accurate location for the plaque commemorating the original St. Paul building. Since St. Paul congregation members were so helpful in the collection of plastic caps for the memorial bench, he thought it was a more appropriate space for the plaque, also given what he had learned about the original building location.

I went over to Franklin yesterday and took some photos (which I have attached). During the spring portion of the school year, there are also flower planters in this memorial space as well. If you have any questions, let me know, but I feel very comfortable with the location of the plaque. It is in a much higher foot traffic space now and is seen by many members of the school and the community. It appears to be well-cared for.”

The first recorded death and burial of a church member was that of Wilhelm Conrad, August 4, 1839. He was a twenty-one-year old laborer.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Died & Where</u>	<u>Buried</u>
Wilhelm CONRAD 1	Moerzheim Rheinbavaria	21 yrs	4 Aug 1839 Belleville	5 Aug 1839

Reverend Flickinger performed the first recorded marriage:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Married</u>
Johannes WAMSER Eleonore WAMSER	K1 Umstadt Gross H Gross Umstadt	Turkey Hill	Oct 1839

Pauline Scholl was the first baptism at the church:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Baptised</u>	<u>Sponsors</u>
Pauline SCHOLL 1 dau of Christian SCHOLL 'furrier' from Metzingen Wurtemberg	11 June 1838	3 Sept 1839	Carl DAUM 'carpenter' Anna Maria SCHOLL

Our first recorded confirmation class was in 1843 with eighteen confirmands. Here is a list of the class:

<u>Conf</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Where Born</u>
1843	Lorenz HEUBLEIN son of Heinr. & Anna Marg. (SCHNABEL) HEUBLEIN of Belleville Heinr from Gessendorf; Anna from Rodeail Meiningen	14 Sept 1826	Gessendorf Saxony Meiningen
"	Friedrich MOEHLMANN son of Heinrich & Margretha Elisabeth (PIEPER) MOEHLMANN of Belleville Heinr b. Menslage Hannover	25 Dec 1827	Menslage Hannover
"	Georg FISCHER son of Georg & Christine (ROEDELBERGER) FISCHER of High Prairie Geo b. Henbach Hessen Darmstadt	7 Dec 1823	Henbach Hessen Darmstadt
"	Friedr Jacob FORCARDE son of Franz & Margaretha (HAURIN) sic FORCARDE of High Prairie both b. Mauschbach in Rheinbavaria	25 June 1826	Mauschbach Rheinbavaria
"	Georg FRITZ	11 Mar 1828	
"	Leonhard FRITZ sons of Adam & Magdalena (HAAS) FRITZ of Turkey Hill Adam b. Moerlenbach Hessen Darmstadt	5 Nov 1829	Moerlenbach
"	Georg SEIFRIED son of Nicol & Magdalena SEIFRIED of West Prairie Nicol b. Heuchelheim Rheinbavaria	15 Mar 1826	Heuchelheim
"	Johann FISCHER son of Joh FISCHER of Belleville Joh. b. Buchau Thurnau Rheinbavaria	19 Apr 1826	Buchau Bavaria
"	----- WETZEL		
"	Leonhard HORN son of Margar Barbara HEGMANNIN Marg b. Neuhaus Meiningen Hildburghausen	21 Nov 1829	Neuhaus Meiningen Hildburghausen
"	Johann FISCHER son of Johann & Christine (BAIER) FISCHER of Belleville Joh from Wuestendorf Bavaria	1 Mar 1826	
"	Louise HEUBLEIN dau of Heinr & Anna Margaretha (SCHNABEL) HEUBLEIN of Belleville Heinr from Gessendorf Rodeail Saxony Meiningen	18 Jan 1830	Gessendorf Saxony Meiningen
"	Catharina PFEFFER dau of Heinr & Anna Maria (NAGEL) PFEFFER of near Belleville Heinr b. Merxheim; Anna b. Kobbellen Rheinbavaria	22 June 1830	Merxheim Rheinbavaria
"	Margaretha PFEFFER dau of Joh & Anna Mar. (POELLINGER) PFEFFER of near Belleville Joh & Anna b. Merxheim Rheinbavaria	25 Mar 1830	Merxheim Rheinbavaria
"	Maria Elisabeth BERSCHEE dau of Gottlieb & Eva Elisab. (PARR) BERSCHEE of Belleville Gott & Eva from Hassloch Rheinbavaria	13 Mar 1830	Hassloch
"	Charlotte GERLACH dau of Jacob & Anna Cathar. (BRUMM) GERLACH of Belleville Jac & Anna from Concken Rheinbavaria	22 Apr 1830	Concken
"	Margaretha BRANDENBURGER dau of Phil Peter & Juliana (JUNG) BRANDENBURGER of High Prairie both b. Mandel RheinPrussia		
"	Margaretha SEIFRIED dau of Nicol SEYFRIED of West Prairie Nicol from Heuchelheim Rheinbavaria	14 Oct 1828	Heuchelheim

On December 26, 1839, Flickinger was appointed preacher for the next year at a salary of one hundred fifty dollars a year. In 1840, he performed seven weddings, five funerals and thirteen christenings. At the general meeting held on January 18, 1840, our first church, the German Evangelical Congregation, had a membership of twenty-two people on the record. This number did not include families. Males of majority age were the only persons considered members at this time.

At this meeting, local contractors named Knoebel and Kumm were ordered to build a pulpit, platform, and steps at the church entrance. They also built twelve benches that were each twelve feet long to seat church members. The additions cost the church seventy dollars.

A second constitution was drafted on June 28, 1841. It was adopted on September 1, 1841 and signed by Adolph Hildebrandt, President and A. Hatel, scribe. The name is given as the German Protestant Congregation of Belleville.

The following is taken from this constitution.

The Purpose:

- First, to promote religion in the German Language according to the Protestant Confession.
- Second, to sustain a German elementary school in connection with the church.

The tenets or principles state:

- Matters of the congregation composed of adult male members can only be decided in a general meeting, and members must acknowledge the Protestant faith.
- A board of ten trustees is to be elected in the general meeting, whose duty shall be to execute the orders of said meeting.
- The congregation has sole power to elect a minister, on who is willing and competent to also act as teacher in the elementary school.

- The church building is to be used for school purposes, and children of non-members are to be admitted to the school when there is room for same.
- Widows are admitted to membership but cannot vote.
- Dues of indigent members are to be remitted.

The constitution further explained there would be a contract for the preacher/teacher, with stipulations. The contract specified which religious duties he would be paid and which duties he shall perform gratis for the poor. Members who contributed to the salary of the minister and the upkeep of the church shall not be compelled to pay as much tuition for their school children as non-members. When matters pertaining to the minister are scheduled at a meeting, the resident would notify the minister but was not allowed to be present.

The remaining portion of the constitution lists the adjustment of grievances between the congregation and the minister in minute details. The conclusion contains the names of 153 members, who according to the said paragraph, signed as church members under the condition that the school teacher be separate and distinct from the minister's position.

At the end of 1841, Flickinger gave up his pastoral duties because his annual salary of \$150.00 did not meet living expenses for him and his family. Belleville village had four hundred residents in 1842. The congregation did not foresee expansion and they couldn't afford to give him a raise.

He retired to farming in Johannesburg, Illinois. He founded the Concordia congregation in Stookey Township, where the building was nicknamed the Flickinger Church.

Flickinger died January 26, 1866 at the age of fifty-seven and is buried in the Concordia Church cemetery, Millstadt, Illinois. He was married to Magdalena Margaret Wagner.

The following descendants of Reverend Flickinger are members of our congregation as of 1989:

Leroy Siegler	Harvey Siegler	Lynn McCullough
Timothy McCullough	Lucille Goetz	Lou Ann James

Chris James
David Knoebel
Mathilda Dammerman
Brian Harszy
Eric Stanton

Lillian Butzinger
Stephen Knoebel
Charles Harszy
Craig Harszy
Sheri Stanton

Donna Knoebel
Malinda Mulligan
Roger Harszy
Nancy Stanton

The Church and School Improve

Alexis Dony was elected pastor February 28, 1842. He was guaranteed a salary of one hundred fifty dollars per year plus one hundred dollars a year as a teacher for the school.



Alexis Dony

During his tenure, the church building was improved. Mr. Kirkpatrick was ordered to lay the floor, erect doors and place shutters on the church. Messrs. Mac and Hiley did stucco plastering on the walls. The pulpit and benches for the church and school were delivered and installed as well as heating to be used only during school. A steeple and a second bell were purchased for a total cost of fifty-four dollars and fifty cents. All school necessities were purchased. A blackboard was purchased for three dollars. A donation of three dollars and twenty-five cents was received for school books.

From the very beginning of the history of St. Paul, special emphasis was placed on Christian education. At a congregational meeting of 1843, the president closed his remarks to the congregation with the following words: *“Education of the youth, and advancement of religion in general are our aims, and even though these ideals may require much labor and effort, we*

will continue the pursuit of the progressive aims, for which our posterity will be everlastingly grateful.”

The name of the church was then called The German Protestant Church and School Congregation in Belleville. The school began April 1, 1842. Classes were taught in German and was regularly attended by forty to 50 children. This was the only school in Belleville. Students came from English, Catholic and, of course, German families.

Every Sunday, church was held. Occasionally, Catholic services by the missionaries from Cahokia, Illinois were held here. This was understandable because the number of Germans was small, so they gladly united for the preservation of their interest and tolerated other divergent religious convictions.

At the General Meeting of the church held on July 10, 1841, President Westermann, praised the church building efforts which totaled six hundred seventy -two dollars plus a loan debt of one hundred dollars.

In 1843, Dony was reappointed minister and teacher. The financial report stated the church building, including the lot and school equipment, cost eight hundred seventy-eight dollars and twenty cents with a balance on hand of twenty-two cents. The debts amounted to one hundred seventy-six dollars and twenty cents. Dony was again reappointed in 1844. The records show some interesting developments. School Commissioner Mohr allowed twelve dollars and five cents from the state school fund to the church school for costs from September to December 1843.

This was the first mention of the state allowing support to the school. The board purchased Lot One Hundred Seventy-Four at a tax title sale to obtain a clear deed (the church was located on this lot) and, at the same sale, the congregation bought adjacent land to either side, Lots One Hundred Seventy-Three and One Hundred Seventy-Five. Presently, this land is owned by the Belleville District 118 School District and is home to the Franklin Elementary School. When the first Franklin School was built, the hill (the location of our first church) was lowered twenty feet during ground leveling.

Dony continued his role as pastor/teacher from 1844 to 1849. Progress marched on and our first church and school were coming to fruition.

However, nothing could prepare those faithful pioneers of our beautiful city or church congregation for the upcoming tragedies. Pastor Dony was to officiate at the marriage of Charles Kettler and Rosalie Huelbig. At that time, the Kaskaskia River was flooded. Rosalie, the mother of the bride, her two sisters and a friend were determined to arrive in Belleville for the nuptials. Their carriage overturned in a flooded ravine next to the river while approaching the ferry. Sadly, the women drowned. The next day, Dony performed a funeral service instead of a wedding.

In 1849, an epidemic of cholera visited Belleville and vicinity between the middle of January and August. Over two hundred fifty people died, and burial always took place within twenty-four hours after death.

Early in 1849, Dony's salary was lowered to two hundred dollars per annum. This reduction in salary didn't help the finances of the church. With the other financial obligations of the church, there was not enough money from the offerings to pay the reduced salary for Dony. He was unable to sustain himself on this pittance and resigned October 2, 1849.

Dony began farming on Dutch Hill, a small town on the east side of the Kaskaskia River, where the unfortunate bride-to-be had lived with her family. He was later called and resumed his pastoral duties.

Another New Preacher Brings Growth



Johann Wettle

Hired as our pastor on May 1, 1850, Wettle's salary was two hundred dollars annually. There were eighty students

in the school even though Belleville had established a public-school system that year.

Johann Wettle was born Gunsbach in Alsace, France in December 7, 1820 making him thirty years old at the time of his hire. Trained as a missionary in Basel, Switzerland and ordained to the ministry by the Gustav-Adolph-Society, he was sent to America in 1844 to preach the Gospel to the Germans here.

He lived in Belleville with his wife, Caroline and son Victor. Census records show a thirteen-year-old girl named Elizabeth Stolberg as a member of the household.

During that year, church membership expanded by forty-eight people to a total of one hundred twenty. More of the democratic government-minded citizenry in Germany immigrated to the United States for a better way of life and politics. We were pleased our German congregation expanded, but not at the cost of the turmoil our new citizens caused.

Those new members *“brought another spirit into the congregation than the one that blew until then. Their education, as well as their critical talents, undermined God’s word and desired that pure reason in belief and life be preached.”*

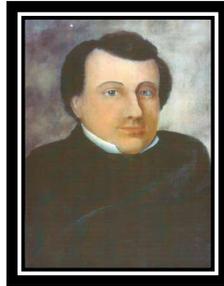
Wettle gave a sharp sermon about this on Sunday. He is quoted as saying, *“Everyone be damned who set their reason above their faith.”* A revolt broke out in the congregation. Wettle was charged with “abstracting the globe”, removed from his post, and the church closed to him. Wettle resigned on January 24, 1851 due to conflict within the church.

He continued to teach in the school, but, could not minister. He was forced to leave January 28, 1851. Wettle served as the pastor of a church in Boonville in Cooper County, Missouri, in 1854. He lived in Sandersville, Indiana in 1863. In 1886, he served as the pastor of the German Evangelical Church in La Salle, Illinois. He died December 26, 1888 and is buried in La Salle.

In 1850, Belleville had a population of two thousand nine hundred forty-one people. This did not include West Belleville which was a village until 1882.

The dividing line between the two communities was Richland Creek which now crosses West Main Street by the police headquarters.

A Pastor/Teacher Team



Justus Jacob Balthasar Hoppe

He was elected preacher February 8, 1851. Andreas Lang was appointed teacher for one year.

The year 1851 was filled with dreams and hope. The congregation decided to build a new church on February 25, 1851. The church purchased the Roedelsberger property on B Street, for three hundred seventy-five dollars on May 17, 1851. It was intended for future church construction.

A general meeting was held June 10, 1851. The congregation appointed five committees for raising the money to pay for the lot. Each committee was assigned a ward. There would be a fifth committee established for West Belleville. Ground breaking for the second church was planned for the next spring. Roedelsberger Place eventually became the location for our second church.

During Hoppe's tenure, the pastorate and school were separated. Mr. Andreas Lang and Mr. Charles Johnson, who was elected October 28, 1851, began to receive salaries. Hoppe introduced a new hymnal to the congregation from Rhein-Bavarian and ordered three hundred copies.

Discord once again erupted. It was thought either the expectations were too high for future school growth, the enlightenment which came in 1848

involved too little self-sacrifice of the congregation or left-over festering feelings for Reverend Wettle were to blame.

Hoppe received a meager salary of two hundred dollars a year, which was too little for living expenses. He demanded a raise in his salary because he no longer received the additional pay of school teacher. The congregation could not or would not agree.

Disagreement and quarrel among the congregation followed. Many council members were overthrown, members left in mass, and another group was thrown out. The church council was overthrown. Complaints about peace disturbance and libel were brought before the Belleville's civil court and spread by newspapers. Fliers were posted in the community.

Discouraged, Hoppe resigned on February 25, 1852 and went back to farming. The above disturbances caused the church school to close its doors.

Our School Spirit Returns



August Le Pique

On October 12, 1852, after the Wettle and Hoppe conflicts and rebellion ceased, we called August Le Pique to be our next pastor. He also became the main teacher at our reopened school.

Born November 4, 1816, August Le Pique began his career as a minister of the Evangelical Protestant Church in Karlsruhe, Baden, now present-day

Germany, in 1839 and emigrated later to America to be a preacher in Highland, Illinois.

Our protestant school reached one hundred forty students so rapidly that an assistant was hired for Le Pique. Mr. Michael Seitz was a professionally trained teacher from the grand-duchy of Baden, Germany. He took part in that country's Revolution of 1848 joining the insurgents with a company of artillery. When the disturbance was quelled, he fled with his wife to the United States and arrived in Belleville. He became the assistant teacher in the church school at a salary of fifteen dollars a month. LePique's salary was reduced to one hundred fifty dollars a year.

Due to financial woes and the inability to pay Le Pique's reduced salary his pay was further reduced to one hundred dollars per year. Regrettably, the congregation was unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices to pay that reduced amount. An attitude of enlightenment and rationalism had come over the congregation changing their attitudes towards responsibility.

A member objected to the song books introduced in the choir by Le Pique, claiming the books were full of indecent and drinking songs and it was ordered that the minister pay for these books. Because his salary was reduced to a pittance and the dispute over the hymnals, Le Pique resigned at the end of 1855.

About this time, the board arranged to rent the church and school building to the public-school board for one year to gain more funds for St. Paul. After Le Pique left St. Paul, he became the preacher for a new German congregation, which later joined the old Lutheran Missouri Synod and became the Zion Church. Le Pique was the 'resident preacher' at the German Evangelical Protestant Church in Highland, Illinois from 1851-1859.

He was listed as a registered voter in District 33 of St. Louis County in an area call Butchertown (north of Easton, west of Vandeventer Avenue) in 1868. August Le Pique died August 14, 1868 at the age of fifty-two He is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery in Normandy, St. Louis County, Missouri. A relative of August corresponded with Jo Ann Elmore as to the following facts: August was born in St. Louis County on September 13, 1861. He was married to Maria Sophia Le Pique who lived from 1831 - 1891.

Author's note: During frontier times, most Evangelical churches received their religious leadership from a travelling preacher who gave a worship service to multiple congregations. The word PREACHER was used instead of PASTOR because his primary objective was to PREACH the word of God.

Editor's note: A RESIDENT PREACHER was a preacher who served just one congregation.

If at First You Don't Succeed...



Justus Jacob Balthasar Hoppe

Justus Hoppe was called for the second time by the congregation and took up his post again on February 10, 1856. Unfortunately, he could not stop further deterioration in the congregation.

Once again, a teacher was hired, but after so many gloomy experiences, the parents preferred to send their children to the public school that Belleville had started in 1856. The church school was closed again on April 1, 1857. A melodeon, known today as an organ, was bought for the accompaniment of the hymns at the cost of one hundred fifty dollars, but it was hardly used.

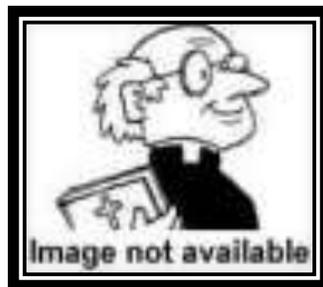
The tithe collectors gave up their posts one after another. No one wanted to give more contributions and they didn't want to allow themselves to be laughed at and ridiculed. Finally, the preacher was supposed to collect his own salary from the church members. Hoppe rejected this as incompatible with his post. Church services were completely discontinued and the

building locked. October 22, 1857 was the date the school board began renting the church for sixty dollars a year for use as a school building.

The reverend resigned July 19, 1857. After this last resignation of Hoppe, the congregation met with many trials and tribulations. On January 31, 1858, the president began his annual report with the following words: *“The council feels itself necessitated to explain the following to the congregation: since last year many changes have made themselves felt in the congregation. There is no more sympathy existing for the continuation of the congregation: for all the entreaties of the council to the members to appear at the meetings there was never performance. May this meeting today lead to healing and give encouragement and light to the well-being of our congregation.”*

But the invocation remained a pious wish. No general meeting occurred because no members attended. The administrators in this difficult time of need were the gentlemen John Bieser, Christian Kaysing, Georg Brenner, Georg Heberer, Andreas Kissel, Friedrich Baetje, John Friedmann, Jacob Amelung, and Ernst Weissenborn.

A New Attitude



A. H. Tauberth

On May 23, 1859, A. H. Tauberth of St. Louis was elected minister with a salary of at least two hundred dollars a year.

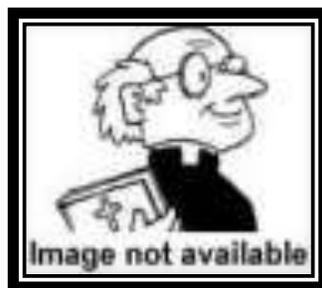
Church services resumed December 26, 1858, but with trial preachers. The old church was returned by the school board because of dilapidation

and the church sold the building site for two hundred dollars. This revenue was to be used for the building of a church and school on the Roedelsberger Lot, which had been paid in full by this time.

The church president addressing the congregation at a general meeting June 21, 1859, made an earnest appeal for better conditions in the church. He stressed more money was needed for a better preacher and teacher. He said too much hate, thanklessness and evil was heaped upon board members, so much so, that they threatened to resign. Tauberth was dismissed on 23 October 1859 after the board agreed to pay his bills.

Astonishingly, a few faithful members established a fund of four thousand dollars to begin a new church building. Congregational President John Bieser stated the following in his 1860 annual report: *“Let us be joyful that after a long interruption, we have succeeded again in attaining a certain unity; let us be joyful to perceive, that a goodly portion of old supporters of our congregation have not lost their loyalty and interest in spite of all the bitter experiences; and let us do all that we can, in order not to fall apart again into chaos in front of the eyes of the city.”*

A New Preacher for a new Church



Theodore Klingsohr

The decision to build a new church and school was concluded. April 15, 1860 would be recorded as the date this decision was reached.

Theodore Klingsohr would preach from 1859 - 1861.

Klingsohr was born in Bavaria in 1808. He lived in Belleville with his wife, Sophia. He was elected preacher for a six-month interval from November 6, 1859 and ending May of 1860. He was to be paid one hundred seventy-five dollars.

In the Heat of the Night

On November 18, 1864, a fire consumed our beloved first church located on the spot of the current Franklin School.

The building was not being used for services or school at the time of the fire.

The bell from the first church along with some of the White Oak boards were salvaged from the fire for prosperity.

The Phoenix of St. Paul

Out of the ashes of that fire rose a beautiful credenza made from a White Oak base board from the first church.

The plank's original dimensions were three quarter inches thick by ten inches wide by twelve feet long.

Our ancestors' determination and dedication lives on in this amazing work of love. It can be viewed in the Chapel of Heritage Hall.



To make the credenza, the board was cut to six feet long and three feet high. The four-inch facing, and mid-leg supports were also salvaged from boards elsewhere in the old sanctuary. All of them are white oak.

To look at it, there is nothing spectacular or noteworthy about the credenza. Until you learn the history of the origin of these boards. First, someone had foresight enough to save the wood, and stash it in a storage area of our second and third church buildings. Second, it served a need in the reconstructed Chapel area which fit the decor as well.

When you learn the history of this piece of wood, you may be amazed. A fair estimate of the age of a white oak tree of this saw-log size would place it at approximately 70 years old. Since the first church was constructed in 1839, a seventy-year old tree would begin growing from that acorn in pre-revolutionary times, or about 1773-1776, the time of our nation's beginning.

Imagine that tree grew somewhere in Illinois. It may have grown in St. Clair County, or by some estimate, within the Illinois United Church of Christ South Conference boundaries. It may be of further historical interest to note that the white oak tree was nominated in 1972 by the school children of Illinois as the official state tree. This was only a few generations or so late for this salvaged item, but in time for our congregation to appreciate its real significance.

Precious and Priceless

St. Paul United Church of Christ is blessed and honored to be the caretaker of another artifact from our first church.

It is awesome and inspiring that this work of art is well-preserved and functional.



The first bell of the Free German Church, which rang in jubilation beginning in 1840, is proudly displayed in our Welcome Center and hung in a wooden frame. The frame is not completed yet, but it provides a place of honor for an object over one hundred seventy-five years old. Not even a devastating fire could deaden its sound. In a recent church service, it proudly rang as it was moved down the sanctuary isle.

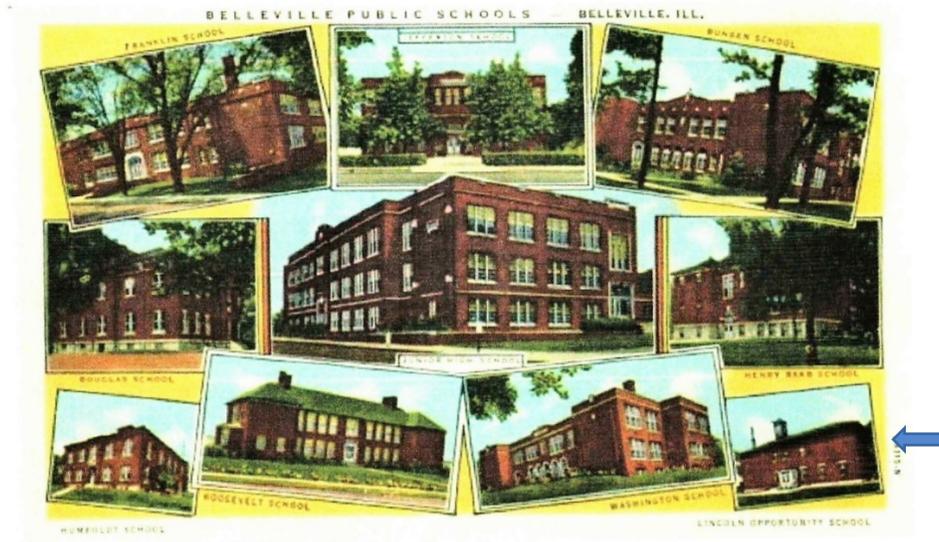
In the Fall of 1839, the congregation of our church ordered this bell from a company in Philadelphia. Due to that year's bad winter, the bell was delivered in the Spring of 1840. It hung in the steeple of our first church on Spring Street, where Franklin School is today. It called those first members to church every Sunday morning for seventeen years.

When the church building was sold to the Belleville School District, the bell stayed until the building later burned down. Belleville's Lincoln Opportunity

School was the next borrower for the bell. Later, the new Franklin School used it to call students to class.

Postcard of the Past

This postcard is from our archives. This replica shows the school buildings in Belleville. The postcard was sold in the 1950s.



Lincoln Opportunity School is shown in the lower right-hand corner. That building housed our bell after the fire. In 1925, our congregation asked for the bell's return. The school district concurred. It was reinstalled, with the existing two bells in the tower of our second church, now known as Heritage Hall. All three bells were rung during our one-hundredth anniversary. In 2017, the bell was restored through the generosity of a local business, Century Brass Works. It is on display in the Welcome Center our church.

A note to the reader

In September 2017, Roger and I heard the same challenge whispered in our ears. This book is the result of that whisper.

This was fun to research and assemble. It is a joy to share with you. Many thanks and recognition to Reverend Koepcke and all the Staff of St. Paul Church. We would like to applaud the church members who provide information, pictures and talent to the archives. Learning and dreaming about yester-year is what we are all about. Preserving it for the future is our gift to you.

Thank you for travelling with us to 1839 for a look at the way we were. You have time to rest and prepare to continue our journey for Part II of the Histories of St. Paul about the second church, it's pastors and congregation.

Direct comments, diary, author and editor notes are *italicized*.

Information Sources

- ≈ *Document written by Mr. Ross French*, a member of our church, April 1987.
- ≈ *The 70th Jubilee Booklet of St. Paul's* by Reverend Otto F. Pessel in 1909. German translation by Lynn C. Koehler of our congregation, 1973
- ≈ *Research* by Carol Kirby of the Belleville Public Library, Main Branch, Spring, 2016.
- ≈ *William P. Shannon IV*, Curator, St. Clair County Historical Society, August 2016
- ≈ *The 1984 Church History* section of the Saint Paul United Church of Christ Pastoral Position document
- ≈ *Draft of tribute* written for 100th Anniversary of St. Paul Church.
- ≈ *Letter to Pastor Ann Asper Wilson* from Sandra Kuehn, church archivist, dated 19 July 2002. Subject: First church's location.
- ≈ *Copies of deed and Platte information*, St. Clair County courthouse, dated 17, July 2002. Copies housed in archives of St. Paul Church.
- ≈ *Newspaper article written by Preacher Otto Pessel*, minister of St. Paul Church. Subject: History of St. Paul's Church. Published in the Belleville News-Democrat, St. Clair County Centennial Edition, 1890. Original in church archives.
- ≈ *Handwritten draft document* of St. Paul history to mark our 147th Anniversary in 1986
- ≈ *English translation of handwritten German documents* recording St. Paul activities from 1839 to 1939 for the Centennial Celebration. Translation by Mr. Charles Lenz.
- ≈ *Milestones of Our Heritage*, St. Paul's publication celebrating the 150th Anniversary year, 1989. Proof copy.
- ≈ *Diary of Reverend Riess*, supplied by his grandson, the Honorable Aldred Riess, Circuit Judge of southern Illinois and resident of Red Bud, Illinois. Published in Our St. Paul's, October 1942

- ≈ *Obituary of Preacher Johann Jakob Riess, 1855.* Published in Der Friedensbote of August 1, 1855. Translated on March 28, 1997 by Eric Oppenheimer, St. Louis, MO with footnotes by Robert Beucher of St. Louis, MO.
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- ≈ *Book celebrating 150 years of St. Paul UCC*
- ≈ *FindAGrave.com website* provided statistics
- ≈ *Ancestry.com genealogical website family member* of August Le Pique provided information in this book. He/she wishes to remain anonymous.
- ≈ *Church Records of St. Paul United Church of Christ, 1839-1939.* Published by the St. Clair County Genealogical Society, 1994.
- ≈ *Interview with Jon Boente and photos of the first church's location* by Judi Keplar.

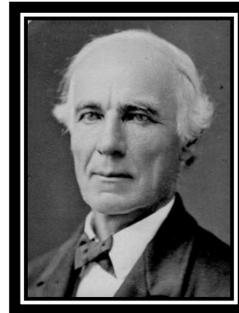
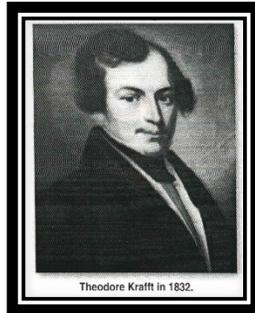
Chronological Order of Events 1839-1860

March 17, 1839 Riess' 1st Sermon	April 13, 1839 1st Constitution	August 1, 1839 Flickinger Called
August 4, 1839 1st Funeral	September 1, 1839 Construction Began	September 3, 1839 1st Baptism
October 1839 1st Marriage Performed	September 1, 1841 2nd Constitution Adopted	February 28, 1842 Dony Called
May 1, 1850 Johann Wettle Called	February 8, 1851 JJB Hoppe Called	February 8, 1851 Long Hired-Teacher
June 10, 1851 Church/School Separated	October 12, 1852 Le Pique Called	February 10, 1856 JJB Hoppe Called
April 1, 1857 School Closed	July 10, 1857 Church Closed	October 22, 1857 Church Rented

December 26, 1858
Services Resumed

November 6, 1859
Theodore Klingsohr Called

In Memory of a celebrated citizen



Theodore Krafft, Belleville's first Mayor
1832 1860