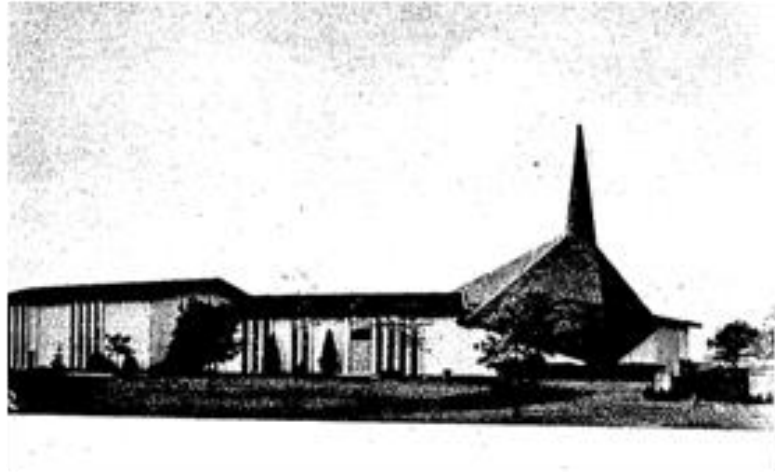


North American Baptist Heritage Commission

Church Histories

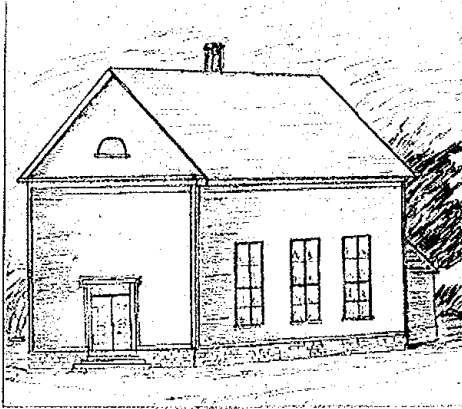
**Grace Church, Racine, Wisconsin**

The year was 1854, when 17 German-speaking Christians in Racine decided they should form a church! On December 5th, that is what they did, calling their group the “First German Baptist Church”. The Rev. J. Eschmann was their pastor. The city of Racine was only six years old at the time, with a population of 5,000. These 17 “founders” were sure their church would grow — and it did, so after two years, in 1856, they built a small meeting-place — at a cost of \$600!!

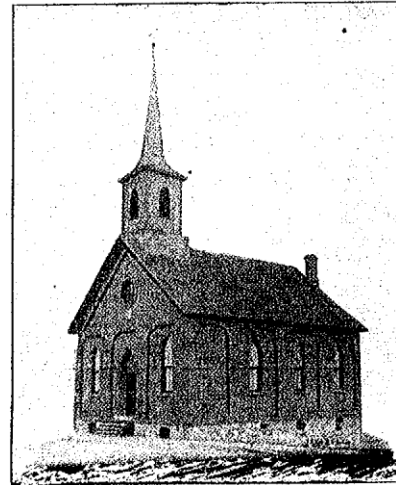
They were glad for this building, because until then, they had been meeting in homes, in the Court House, or even in the English Baptist Church. Twenty years later, in 1876, they were able to erect a two-story church building and parsonage at a cost of \$4,000! God continued to bless them with revivals and outreach, so that they outgrew their second building: a good problem for any church to have, and the members were able to build and dedicate the third building in 1904. The church called itself “The Friendly Church” and had an important mission statement: “Our MOTTO: Christ first and always! OUR AIM; To lead every person to accept Jesus Christ as Savior”.

The First World War took its toll on the church family, however, with various kinds of persecution because of the church’s name and use of the German language, so the name was changed from *German Baptist* to *Grace Baptist Church*. At first, even with the change, services were conducted in both German and English, with only English being adopted in 1924. The Lord continued to bless the work by faithful members so that in 1967 once again there was a new church building — at a cost of \$250,000 including the cost of five acres of land. Thirty years later, in 1997 there was ground-breaking for another new building, with the name changing to *Grace Church*. Today the members celebrate the 160th anniversary of the church which ministers to more than 1,200 families of different cultures, quite a change from the 17 people who began it 160 years ago!

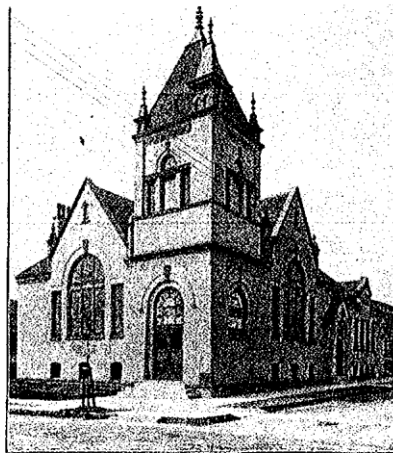
1854



1856



1878



1904

Adapted from *Heritage Horizons*, Vol 21 No 2, Fall, 2014

Bibliographic sources:

Centennial 1854-1954 program Grace Baptist Church, Racine, Wisconsin, with 3 page history

Dedication of new church building Dec 1968

125th Anniversary program 1854-1979

Archival materials:

Souvenir Booklet of the 50th anniversary 1854-1904 (German)

Grace Stewardship Newsletter observing the 150th Anniversary, October 2004

Annual reports 1999, 2004

Some photos of special occasions