

North American Baptist Heritage Commission

Church Histories



First Baptist Church, St. Joseph, Michigan

On January 30, 1860, the city council of St. Joseph gave Lot 384 to a group of German Baptists for a religious edifice. The First German Baptist Church was at once organized with 21 charter members and Rev. William E. Grimm as pastor. A wooden house of worship was organized.

By 1882, the church membership had reached 150, with a Sunday School of 140 scholars. The church continued to grow and make additions to the original building and also erecting new church buildings. A second church was built in 1881 and dedicated in February, 1882. This church included a baptistry, a pipe organ and a choir loft. That church was destroyed by fire in 1921.

A third church was built at a cost of \$50,000 with a dedication service on December 31, 1922.

As membership increased, a decision was made to erect a chapel in Benton Harbor. This chapel was completed in 1909. One hundred and twelve members left to join the daughter church.

For some time both the German and English languages were used. When the decision was made in 1933 to drop the German, 72 members withdrew membership to unite with the Benton Harbor church whose services were still being conducted in German.

In the 1940's a light-house with a beacon light was installed on the top of the church to serve as a symbol of the gospel and the purpose of the church. The church became known as "A gospel lighthouse on the shores of Lake Michigan."

By 1960, when the church celebrated their centennial, church membership had reached 577.



Bibliographical sources:

Centennial Anniversary 1860-1960: Yesterday, Today, Forever, - Christ is the Answer

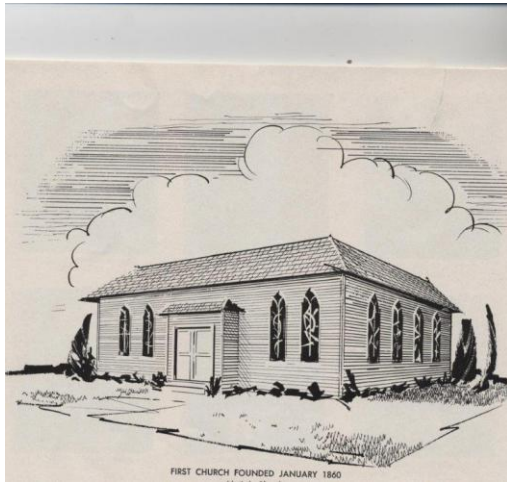
Bartz, Mrs. Olive "Centennial Memories at St. Joseph, Michigan" in Annual 1960, pp 42-44.

"German Baptists Rededicate their improved house of worship." St. Joseph Ev__ Feb 26, 1901

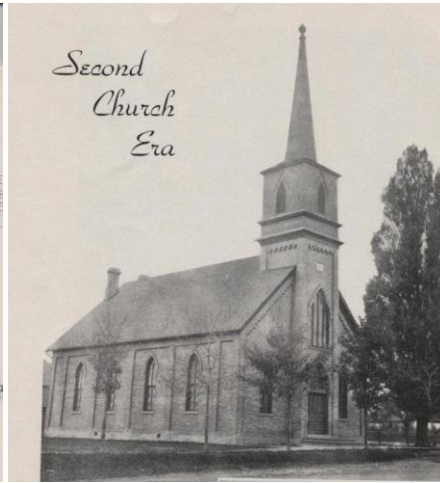
Archival sources in North American Baptist Heritage Center:

Dedication program, December 31, 1922-January 3, 1923.

Newsletters, primarily 1960's.



Sketch of first church 1860



Second church dedicated 1882