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Heritage Horizons

...a memorial book was written in His *presence*, recording those who revered Him
and those who had the highest respect for His name...Malachi 3:16



Editor: Lenore Lang

Point of View *by Lenore Lang*

For those of you who are interested in “past History”, two new books can help you discover some new insights. See the books’ descriptions here on page 1 in our Director’s Notes.

We can celebrate more church anniversaries, dating back 145 and 135 years ! See three of these, on pages 2 and 3.

Archivist Berneice Westerman is retiring/“recycling” from her important work at the Heritage Commission, but she has given us a peek into what that work meant to her in the years since she left the Cameroon mission field. See page 4.

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“You may
have to fight
a battle
more than once
to win it.”

Margaret Thatcher



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Director’s Notes *by Jackie Howell*

Part of our heritage is described in published books. Two new books are now available. The first will be highlighted at the Baptist Heritage and History Society Annual meeting June 4-6, hosted at Sioux Falls Seminary.

Albert W. Wardin’s *On the Edge: Baptists and Other Free Church Evangelicals in Tsarist Russia 1855-1917*. It examines the efforts of the regimes to suppress the Evangelical Free Church movement and how the movement not only survived but also expanded. To what extent did the movement bring upon itself unnecessary opposition because of aggressiveness and tactics? Wardin describes the contributions the movement made to the religious life of Russia and examines its numerical success.

Johann Pritzskau’s (1914) *German Baptists in South Russia* provides insight into the relationship among Mennonite Brethren and German Baptist churches in German communities in what is now Ukraine. Religious persecution did not stop Baptists, Mennonites and others from starting a spiritual renewal movement among German speaking people who had been invited by Catherine the Great to settle in South Russia. It is an English translation by Walter Regehr.

More information on these resources is on our web site nabarchives.org.

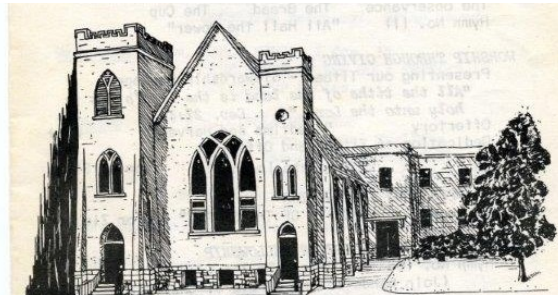
CHURCH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The Oak Street Baptist Church, Burlington, Iowa—145 Years

For your editor, this particular anniversary celebration represents a walk down memory lane, for it is the church I grew up in! Founded in 1869, the church had its beginnings in the hearts of eleven German Baptists from Brome, Germany. This group had left their fatherland to look for new opportunities in America, with Henry Rieke as leader. Together in Burlington, they incorporated as the First German Baptist Church on November 15, 1869. They met in the Rieke home until they could erect a church building in 1870.

In that founding year of 1869, the group called their first pastor, Rev. John Kohrs, my great-grandfather, from Germany and he served for six years. Other pastors followed through the years, and the church records show growth in baptisms each year, and growth in influence throughout the Burlington community.

Today the membership roll lists 330 members, with Rev. Gary Karas serving as pastor. Some years ago some members began another church in a different area of town, the Crossroads Community Church with Jason Unsicker as pastor, and today the two churches co-operate in matters of church camps and other youth activities. So the work begun 145 years ago continues, to the glory of God and the growth of His kingdom.



Bethany Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon — 135 years

Eighteen charter members are listed in the inspiring materials found in our NAB Archives. Some of the members came from Switzerland, and on their arrival on the west coast of the US, they banded together with other Christians who were German-speaking, to eventually form “The First German Church of Baptized Believing Christians (Baptists) of Bethany.”

The 100th anniversary booklet states that “This became the first German Baptist church on the Pacific Coast.....and the first organized German Baptist church west of the Rocky Mountains.” The date: June 22, 1879.

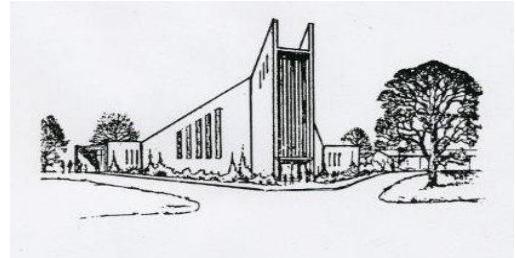
The members contributed funds and erected a church building in 1881.

(continued on page 3)

By 1890 there was need for more space, so a second building was erected in April of that year. Other records indicate that on November 11, 1928, a Spanish style sanctuary was dedicated and the transition was made from German to English. The current sanctuary of the church was dedicated in 1976, and a multi-purpose building, the Ambassador Recreation Center, was opened in 1991

Throughout the years Missions has been “the heartbeat of Bethany” and the church has been at the forefront of sending out pastors and missionaries. Also the church birthed four daughter churches: Trinity Baptist, Stafford Baptist, Family Baptist, and Golden Road Baptist. A wonderful heritage!

Current membership is 271 and the pastor is Rev. Jeff Welch.



The First Baptist Church of Elgin, Iowa, - 135 years

In 1864 Jacob Baumann and his family came to America from Switzerland, settling on a farm near Elgin. He had seminary training in Switzerland and had been a pastor. His family met with other Christian Baptist believers, holding prayer meetings and Sunday Schools. As their group grew larger, they decided to organize as a church, which they did, on July 2, 1879. It was a joyous occasion for all!

Rev. Jacob Baumann agreed to serve as pastor until September, 1879, after which Rev. J.F. Hoefflin was called. The pastor's salary that year was to be \$250 a year, later increased to \$500 a year.

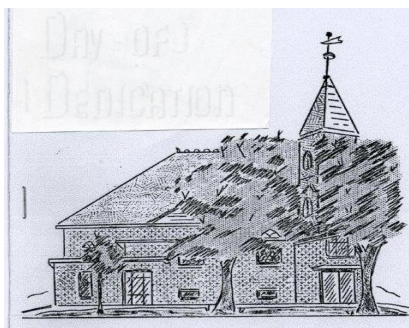
Rev. H.W. Wedel served the church from 1915—1920 and it was during that time that the language of the church services was changed from German to English by request of the Governor of the state of Iowa.

During the years 1921—1935, when the Rev. Phillip Lauer was pastor, the decision was made that church records be kept in the English language as well as German. This was done until 1936 after which the records were kept only in English.

Records found in our Heritage Commission Archives indicate that the church was active in many areas — youth meetings, women's organizations, and Sunday School, and music. At various times there was a church orchestra, and often a junior choir, training voices for the adult choir.

Members of the Elgin church were instrumental in the start of another church in Sumner, Iowa, which became an independent Baptist church in 1947.

Current church membership in Elgin stands at 152 and the pastor is Rev. R. Lee Boleyn.



THE ARMCHAIR TRAVELER

by Archivist Berneice Westerman



Before I came to USA in 1989 to recycle to new challenges and opportunities, God provided my new field of service when Dr. George Dunger asked my sister to ask me if I would consider working with him in the NAB Archives and I said “Yes” without spending time to pray about it first. God’s plan was the most exciting and fulfilling that I came into, after a year of visiting supporting churches and events that needed missionaries to help understand the needs of Cameroon.

In 1991 I was considered an assistant in his office and typed most of his letters and helped him arrange things in the orders and categories that would make them more easily found by researchers who want to know the History of the event, church or person. As a High School Student I did not like History at all but have learned that it is a long clothes line that has Big Events already in place and I learned to put the small events into the right spaces in between. I learned to know better the leaders that God provided for us as a Conference at times that we needed their talents and have seen how He has used them by learning what happened in their lives as is presented in their obituaries by a small dash between the date of their birth and the date of their death.

In the early days of research, I saw the need of the German language that I had not had the opportunity to use in Primary School. It made me regret not being able to learn more German but the War made it a very wrong thing to talk it or even let your friends know that you knew a little bit. The language change from German to English in our churches is a different story in each church. Our early Seminary students could not completely understand the English, and so the need of the German Classes and professors there gave them the opportunity of learning the scriptures in their only language and help the immigrants of German Background.

The artifacts we have from Africa have been blessings and Joshua Webdna from Cameroon has given us a good description of their use and meaning which enhances the value of objects in our collection.

Think of the tremendous contribution that our German Heritage has contributed to the USA and the things that we enjoy because they came and shared their talents of farming, metal-work, and buildings. One of our German Chaplains recycled some small boards into shelves with holes in them to serve as Communion Cup holders. He formed the empty bullet shells into small metal cups to fit the holder, and I had the privilege to unwrap it and put it on display.

Did I finish the task that should have been done? No. I will continue to be on the Board of Governors as a member as well as come to volunteer and do research for the book that I am planning to write about how God has directed me by using many of you to show me the correct way to serve God. Some of those people have already gone home to glory and God knows what value you and they have all been to mold, shape and direct me to follow His desire for my life.