

Erich Walter Becker

Pastor 1900 - 1905

Born in Danzig, Germany on January 23, 1864.

He was educated in Koenigsurg and Keil, in Germany and the Theological Seminary in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

The congregation of St. Paul's German Protestant church held their annual business meeting on Sunday, January 14, 1900, and chose Reverend Erich Becker of Terre Haute, Indiana as pastor. Around this time, the congregation decided that the pastor no longer needed to be re-elected annually, as had been the case previously. Accordingly, Becker assumed his duties without the perceived humiliation of a yearly consensus of the congregation.

Expanded the school hall and the parsonage for two thousand four hundred and sixty-nine dollars.

Re-activated the youth program. In cooperation with the Sunday School, purchased a piano for two hundred dollars. Bought the baptismal font, currently in the Chapel of Heritage Hall, for ninety dollars.

On Monday, November 11, 1901, the front on the church was damaged by a fire that destroyed the Anheuser Busch Opera House across from the church on B Street. This prompted the renovation of the front of the church which can be noticed today by looking at the different type of brick on the south end of the building.

The renovation also included the steeple and replacement of the windows, blown out by the fire, by stained-glass ones. These remain visible today. The cost was five thousand one hundred twenty dollars. The new section was dedicated on Pentecost Monday in March of 1903. The remainder of the building, constructed in 1861, still stands and is known today as Heritage Hall and the Chapel.

The "Hymn Book of the German Evangelical Protestant Congregation" was ordered on January 12, 1902.

Sunday School enrollment increased from one hundred fifty children to two hundred seventy.

Received pay raise from six hundred to seven hundred dollars a year.

His ministerial duties declined in large part to the indifference of the younger generation in St. Paul's. This attitude stemmed from the ready availability for other churches and pastors.

Becker resigned as Pastor of St. Paul's on August 21, 1905. He moved to a congregation in Cleveland, Ohio.

He died in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 2, 1929.

Information Sources:

1909 70th Jubilee Booklet of St. Paul's by Reverend Otto F. Pessel. Translation from the German by Lynn C. Koehler of our congregation, 1973

Moments in History pamphlets compiled by Archivist Alice Jerome for insert to St. Paul's Church Service Programs during the 150th Anniversary year (1989)

The History segment of the St. Paul UCC 175th Anniversary insert to the Belleville News-Democrat newspaper of Sunday January 12, 2014. Material researched and prepared by Alice Jerome, Archivist of St. Paul's Church.

Research by:

Carol Kirby of the Belleville Public Library, Main Branch, Spring, 2016.

Belleville Daily Advocate newspaper article, July 18, 1905.