

The Fourth Church 1890-

In 1889 the third church building had served Ebenezer's parishioners for sixty-five years. On the national scene at the same time, Benjamin Harrison was serving as the twenty-third president of the United States of America. Political debates swirled around the important economic issue of the time, tariff regulation. At Ebenezer Church there also was an issue to be resolved-whether or not to build a new church. After debate on the issue, the Joint Council voted favorably for the demolition of the existing church and the construction of a new edifice with better and larger facilities to accommodate the increasing membership of both congregations.

The following list of names are those of the people who served their respective congregations on Council at the time and who voted on the building issue:

Lutheran

Elders: John P. Reitz
Owen Krause

Trustees: William H. Reitz
Lewis F. Wertman

Deacons: Henry A. Sittler
Edwin Clauss
William H. Frey
Oscar Betz

Treasurer: William F. Krause

Reformed

Elders: Jonas F. Snyder
Paul Hunsicker

Trustees: Owen A. Peter
Edwin H. Snyder

Deacons: James A. Miller
Frank Kerschner
Wilson A. Moser
Lewis Fenstermaker

Treasurer: James W. Korn

The Joint Council authorized the establishment of a building committee representing both congregations. The gentlemen who served are listed as follows:

Lutheran

William F. Krauss

Phaon Reitz

Reformed

Owen A. Peter

James F. Snyder

Committee Treasurer

Jonas German

George T. Oplinger of Slatington was appointed as architect. According to the record, construction of the two-level, Neo-Gothic-styled, red-brick-and-stone building was begun in the spring of 1890. Numerous parishioners were ready to contribute their skilled and unskilled services, horses, wagons, tools, implements, and other paraphernalia necessary for the demolition of the old building and the construction of the new. Thanks to the information received from living descendants and present church members, we are able to provide the names of some of the people who in one way or another assisted in the work.⁸ Their family names are the same or similarly spelled German names as those of some of the early settlers and founders of Ebenezer Church in the eighteenth century. They still have a familiar ring to them when heard in our church community and in the surrounding area:

Moses Mantz

Albert Leiby

Frank Snyder

Phaon Reitz

Milton Reitz

James Sittler

Phaon Rauch

Charles Mantz

George Krause

William Miller

William Mantz

There were two men who served as co-foremen during construction. We have been able to establish that Phaon Reitz served as one.⁹ Unfortunately, we were unable to identify the other.

The building is fifty-four feet wide and one hundred feet in length. The bell tower, including its slate-covered spire, at the southeastern corner rises approximately one hundred feet above the ground. The large clear-toned bell, housed in the tower, has been summoning worshipers to services each Sunday morning for years. Its peals can be heard for miles throughout the Lynn Township countryside.

The lower level of the brick-and-stone edifice was planned to provide space for Sunday-School activities. Space is also provided for the heating plant, blower equipment for the church organ, and extremely limited storage.

Some bits of interesting information regarding the construction of the present edifice have come to light in conversations with current members of Ebenezer Church. The bricks used in the construction of the outside walls were fired at a brickyard in the vicinity of Wind Gap.¹⁰ Charles Mantz, a member of Ebenezer at the time of construction, and a farmer who resided at the base of the northern slope of the Schocharie, approximately two miles southeast of the village of New Tripoli, transported the bricks from the brickyard to the site of construction by horse and wagon.¹¹ On one of his numerous journeys he brought along a very special brick with the figure of a deer embossed on it.¹² It was brought carefully wrapped in a blanket so as not to damage the image. It has been utilized in the construction of the outer wall at the front of the building, located between the beautiful rose window and the gable. Parishioners, who have been interviewed regarding the object, were unable to shed any light on its symbolical significance. However, Pastor Timothy Helms, the pastor of our newly chartered Ebenezer United Church of Christ, informs us that the deer in question could very well be a symbolical representation of man in search of the Lord. He justifies his thinking by quoting the first verse of Psalm 42:

"As the deer pants for water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O Lord."

This could, indeed, be the reason for the deer's appearance on the outer front wall of our church.

Of further interest regarding the brick construction is the fact that the walls are constructed with multi tiers of brick. The outer tier, facing nature's elements, is supposed to be constructed with hard brick. The inner tiers are said to be constructed with a soft brick.¹³ It has been revealed that the soft bricks were fired at a brickyard operated at the time by Peter Loch at the eastern end of the village of New Tripoli.¹⁴ The brickyard was located on the property currently owned by Ruth Kuntz, and most likely stood in the vicinity of the existing barn on the south side of Pennsylvania Highway #143.¹⁵

George Krause, a member of Ebenezer Church and a carpenter who helped in the construction, related to his children how he, working from a scaffold, assisted in placing the spherical cap upon the spire at its pinnacle.¹⁶ The cap, which is still visible, originally had a six- or seven-foot rod anchored to it. The rod, in turn, supported an enormous weather vane which indicated wind direction for the people of New Tripoli for more than fifty years. Supposedly, a photograph was made of the capping event at the pinnacle of the spire. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find a copy of it.¹⁷

Upon entering the nave of the church, a careful observation of the beautifully designed, thirty-foot-high oak ceiling reveals an irregularity worth noting. In the center row of panels running from the front of the nave to the rear, there is one panel which does not conform to the sequential patterns of the others. The deviation in question is located exactly two panels to the rear of the chandelier located in front of the chancel. It has been said that Moses Mantz, a member of the Reformed congregation at the time, and a carpenter by trade, was responsible for the divergent construction of the panel.¹⁸ There are two stories as to why it is not in sequence. One account would have us believe that it was done inadvertently in this manner. The other theory is that it was so constructed intentionally to remind one that nothing in God's world is perfect; only God is perfect. Assuming the latter is correct, the oddity serves as a symbol which conveys a beautiful message regarding Our Creator and that which He has created.

On July 6, 1890, the cornerstone, which had been presented to the Ebenezer congregation by Frank Schlosser of Neffs, was laid. Completion of the structure followed in the fall of the same year.

On Christmas Day, 1890, one of the first activities in the new church was conducted. Thirty-eight young men and women were confirmed in the Reformed faith by Pastor Nevin W. Helffrich.

A record of the cost of demolishing the old church and the construction of the new church building is listed as follows:

"Labor, razing old church and ground

breaking for new church	\$1,945.29
Masonry (bricklaying)	3,497.19
Freight	1,183.00
Lumber (planning mill work, etc.)	4,455.50
Bricks	2,292.87
Carpenter work	2,022.25
Furniture (church auditorium)	927.85

Iron girders and posts	454.88
Lime used for bricklaying	214.50
Sand for plastering	82.77
Cement	14.75
Cornice and tin work	950.12
Slate (roof)	373.45
Painting (basement and auditorium)	678.96
Architect	163.19
Interest on loans	<u>1,476.19</u>
Total Cost	\$20,732.76"